

Speak of the Devil: Preaching Against Heresy and Witchcraft in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries in France

by

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Abstract

The study of Catholic preachers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who delivered sermons linking the devil, the apocalypse, and the Antichrist with heresy and witchcraft shows that their rhetoric was part of a strategy aimed at defending and validating Catholic sacraments and the Church's exclusivity over spiritual salvation. Eliminating the enemies of God and the Church – heretics and witches – was one of the practical outcomes of this discourse. One of the historical paradoxes generated by their demonizing discourse was the creation of an imaginary satanic religion that was then portrayed as the complete, negative reversal of the Church, thus providing counterevidence to validate Catholic doctrines. The existence of medieval heretical sects, and Protestants in the sixteenth century, who openly rejected the authority of the Church and the sacraments led to the progressive construction of a demonizing discourse which presumed the existence of an all-inclusive demonic conspiracy.

Tracing the demonizing discourse of itinerant preachers in the fifteenth century and into the Reformation period of the sixteenth century highlights the parallels between the effects of Catholic preachers' dehumanizing sermons that spilled over from the late Middle Ages into the early modern period. In the fifteenth century, preachers like Vincent Ferrer whipped up anxieties concerning the End Times and the dangers heretics posed to individual salvation right on the eve of the transformation of the image of the witch from an individual performer of harmful magic into a member of a sect of devil-worshipping heretics. In the sixteenth century, preachers like François Le Picart and Simon Vigor called Protestantism the 'religion of the devil'. Beyond the horrific large-scale massacres of the Huguenots, the prosecution of witches accused of serving Satan

and sensational cases of demonic possession soon followed. The public exorcisms performed on French demoniacs was in many respects a form of sermon performed to large crowds and with considerable impact. The crossing of periods shows a similar dynamic concerning the Catholic Church's earlier response to the threat of heresy in which preaching against heresy led to the transformation of practitioners of magic into an imagined sect of devil worshippers.

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<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84005068.item>

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<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8400591m.r=gravure%20miracle%20de%20laon?rk=21459;2>

Introduction

Heresy, magic and the devil in the fifteenth century

The history of preaching in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period is closely tied to the history of the devil. Around 1420, a new satanic paradigm emerged through the demonization of heresy and popular magical practices. In the regions of the Alps, where mendicant preachers and inquisitors were attempting to reform the religious beliefs and practices of their inhabitants, emerged the notion of an organized satanic conspiracy of heretical devil worshippers that were threatening to bring down Christian society from within. The fifteenth-century Alps were a heavily contested religious area where inquisitors were pursuing Waldensian heretics and people suspected of practicing harmful magic were accused of making a pact with the devil. A new variant of demonological literature – treatises devoted to describing the anti-Christian practices of practitioners of harmful magic – defined these witches as a modern kind of conspiratorial satanic sect. Observant and mendicant preachers, who denounced heresy as the religion of the devil and delivered apocalyptic sermons and associated the effects of sorcery and magic with demonic agency, helped to combine all these elements to produce the notion that Christianity was under assault by the followers of Satan. The methodology of this thesis compares the demonizing content of Catholic sermons in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries directed at heretics and practitioners of magic and occurrences of religious repression and violence justified on the grounds of eliminating demonic corruption.

The terminology used to refer to people imagined to be devil worshippers shifted and blurred in its meaning. Preachers reshaped terms used to refer to practitioners of magic and heretics to imbue them with the added connotation of working for the devil. Traditionally, heretics were those who originally dissented from official Church teaching or practice, such as the Cathars or Waldensians. Popular magic was usually associated by the clergy with ordinary people who practiced preternatural rituals in order to affect a desired outcome in their daily lives. Necromancy, the ritual of invoking demons or the spirits of the dead, was a sophisticated learned magical ritual condemned by the Church that was usually practiced by literate and educated members of the clergy. By the late Middle Ages, heresy was increasingly associated with the devil. For rhetorical purposes, preachers intended to deter people in their audience from succumbing to the false religion of heretics by delivering sermons explaining how heretics were really working for the devil and attempting to destroy Christianity. The terms used to refer to the enemies of the Church became blurred and interchangeable when preachers projected this paradigm onto practitioners of magic in their sermons. In the fifteenth-century French speaking Alps, ‘demonized’ practitioners of magic and ‘demonized sorcerers’ were often called “Vaudois”, the French term for Waldensian heretics. This blurring of the terminology reflects the impact of the rhetoric of mendicant preachers who delivered sermons that projected demonic notions used against heretics onto practitioners of magic. Mendicant preachers and inquisitors usually labeled those accused of practicing harmful magic as “heretics” or “sorcerers” but distinguished them from those who were simply in error concerning official religious doctrines by expanding their crime to include the element of devil worship.

This thesis contributes to scholarship on the historical subjects of preaching and the repression of religious deviants by examining how some mendicant preachers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries used demonizing language to promote the notion of a demonic conspiracy before trials against practitioners of magic, who were supposedly operating collectively, began to include accusations of devil worship. The intent of preachers who disseminated demonic notions was to validate the sacramental system by discrediting those who rejected or were perceived to be desecrating the sacraments. It also makes an original contribution to this field by crossing the chronological border between late medieval and early modern periods. The comparison of fifteenth-century sermons targeting heresy and magic with those delivered by French Catholic preachers targeting Protestant Reformers shows that they used a similar rhetorical strategy. Catholic sermons in both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries linked the devil, the apocalypse and the Antichrist with heresy and popular magic as part of a strategy aimed at defending and validating Catholic sacraments and the Church's exclusivity over spiritual salvation. The impact of their demonizing public sermons had a wider impact than they had immediately intended. Their sermons helped to provoke violence against Protestant heretics and increased fears over popular magic and witchcraft on the part of both the elite and wider population. The focus on preaching adds a new perspective to the scholarship that has been exploring the transformations concerning the intellectual, judicial and social history of the devil, heresy and magic leading up to the first large scale witch trials in the 1420s. The focus on French preachers, especially for the sixteenth century, helps to expand the historical understanding of the use of a demonizing rhetoric that transcended the artificial historical boundary between two

periods since there has been relatively little attention paid to their role in the dissemination of the notion of a demonic conspiracy. The periodization concentrating on public sermons also demonstrates that ideas connecting religious deviance with devil worship continued to be used during the hiatus in trials against practitioners of harmful magic since preachers focused their attention on attacking Protestant heretics. At the very least, the sources examined in this thesis make it clear that sermons require greater attention since they played a significant role in shaping the religious world view of the people who attended them, and that the artificial historical boundary between two periods can impede the understanding of important historical developments.

The fusion of heresy and demonic magic was in place c. 1420 when accusations of devil worship began to appear in trials against practitioners of magic in the Western Alps. The passage through the region of the Dominican preacher Vincent Ferrer (c. 1350-1419) between 1399 and 1409 laid the groundwork for the fusion to take place. Ferrer preached apocalyptic sermons denouncing the presence of Waldensian heretics and the practice of popular magical rituals in Dauphiné in Southwestern France and in Switzerland. All these elements would come together – demonic agency, heresy, harmful magic – to define the cult of a conspiratorial sect of devil worshipping witches in both trials and demonological literature.¹ The Waldensian rejection of Catholic sacraments was instrumental in transposing the demonic paradigm from heresy to harmful magic in mendicant sermons. In an attempt to defend the sacramental system against heretics, inquisitors associated the denial of the real presence in the consecrated

¹ Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present* (Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), p. 174.

hosts with the devil. In turn, they pressed accused Waldensian heretics to describe how they misused hosts or how they kidnapped unbaptized infants in their magical rituals.

The founding of the Franciscan and Dominican orders – mendicant preachers – in the thirteenth century was a direct response to the threat posed by oppositional heterodox religious groups, such as the Cathars and the Waldensians. Some preaching friars also assumed the role of inquisitors. The demonization of heretics and witches has been extensively analyzed from the perspective of their inquisitorial and judicial repression.² Analysis of these phenomena has led to substantive advances in scholarly knowledge concerning the intellectual, cultural, religious and social history of heresy and witchcraft in these periods. Medieval inquisitorial tribunals were established in 1229 in order to more effectively repress heresy considering that bishops, who were originally tasked to accomplish this, had showed themselves to be negligent in this respect.³ However, it is argued here that the judicial repression of religious deviants was not necessarily the most important aspect in imposing religious conformity. The sermon was one of the most widespread literary genres of the medieval and early modern periods: “The sermon represented the central literary genre in the lives of European Christians and Jews in the Middle Ages. It provided the primary medium for Christian clergy to

² Both the Dominican inquisitors Bernard Gui (1261-1331) and Nicolas Eymeric (1320-1399) associated heresy and sorcery with the devil in their inquisitorial manuals, Gui's *Practica inquisitionis* (1324) and Eymeric's *Directorium inquistorum* (1376). See Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975); Christine Caldwell Ames, *Righteous Persecution: Inquisition, Dominicans, and Christianity in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013); Malcolm D. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Movement to the Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Pierrette Paravy, *De la chrétienté romaine à la réforme en Dauphiné: évêques, fidèles et déviants: (vers 1340 - vers 1530)* 2 vols. (Rome: École française de Rome, 1993) and Kathrin Utz Temp, “The Heresy of Witchcraft in Switzerland and Dauphiné (Fifteenth Century)” in *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, vol. 6, no 1 (2011), pp. 1-10.

³ C.H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (Harlow: Longman, 1994), p. 190.

convey religious education to lay audiences and it played an important role in the liturgy and life of religious orders”.⁴ Mendicant preachers framed their combat against heresy as a battle against the devil. All this demonizing rhetoric fed into the notorious witch hunts which began c. 1420 and reached their peak after 1560. Religious sermons have been neglected as a source for understanding elite and popular beliefs about witchcraft.⁵ Instead, scholars have largely underappreciated the responsibility of the clergy for witchcraft persecution by arguing that demonological treatises were published only after the start of a witch trial.⁶ Yet the clergy invariably preached sermons on the devil and the evils of magic long before publishing such treatises. Moreover, brief references concerning the clergy’s involvement in the witch trials or their role in the dissemination of ideas about the devil and witchcraft remain typically anecdotal in the secondary sources. While sermons have recently proven to be an invaluable source for the studies of religious history in late medieval and Reformation Europe, they have been neglected in the study of beliefs about the devil and witchcraft. As “cultural brokers” who bridged popular and elite culture, the clergy strongly influenced how a variety of ideas about religion were communicated to the audience in an attempt to “reform popular culture”.⁷

⁴ Beverly M. Kienzle, “Introduction”, in Kienzle (ed.), *The Sermon: Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), p. 143.

⁵ A few exceptions can be noted: Rita Voltmer, “Debating the Devil’s Clergy: Demonology and the Media in Dialogue with Trials (14th to the 17th Century)”, *Religions*, vol. 10, no. 648 (2019), pp. 1-32; Fabrizio Conti, *Witchcraft, Superstition, and Observant Franciscan Preachers: Pastoral Approach and Intellectual Debate in Renaissance Milan* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015) and Franco Mormando, *The Preacher’s Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁶ P.G. Maxwell-Stuart (ed.), *The Malleus Maleficarum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 12.

⁷ Robert Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London: Hambleton, 1987), p. 122.

We should not imagine, however, that the influence worked only one way – cultural historians have established the notion of a ‘two-way flow’.⁸

On the one hand, we know that popular ideas about witchcraft, such as the ability of witches to cause sickness and death, provided much of the material with which inquisitors formulated sophisticated demonological theories.⁹ On the other hand, theologians who promoted witch hunting taught ordinary people that witches were apostates who had renounced God and had made a pact with the devil in order to gain the ability to curse their neighbours. While historians acknowledge this mutual exchange of ideas, there is much that remains unclear as to how this system of interaction actually functioned. The most useful approach thus far has been to analyze records of witch trials to gain insight into the minds of ordinary people and their conception of supernatural occurrences.¹⁰ Analyses of the trials also show that the clergy participated in witch-hunting, as presiding judges in inquisitorial proceedings and as auxiliaries providing assistance to secular judges.¹¹ Mendicant preachers also emphasized the demonic element of medieval heretical sects and popular magical rituals, religions and practices that contradicted official Catholic dogma. During the late Middle Ages, mendicant preachers delivered sermons insisting that beliefs and behaviours outside of prescribed religious practices were forms of demonic corruptions.

⁸ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p. 50.

⁹ Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996).

¹¹ Peter Dinzelbacher, “Clergy” in (ed.) Richard Golden *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, 4 vols. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), p. 195.

The Dominican preacher St. Vincent Ferrer projected the foundational demonological notions in exactly the region in the mountains of the Alps where one of the first outbreaks of large scale trials against ‘demonized’ practitioners of magic took place in Europe (1424 – 1445).¹² Others are also known to have inspired witch panics such as the fifteenth-century Franciscan San Bernardino of Siena (1380 – 1444) who caused a handful of witches to be executed.¹³ Between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, learned ideas about the demonic pact and the witches’ sabbath were transmitted to the laity through the media of sermons, catechisms and accounts of the witch trials.¹⁴ It is therefore time to engage in a systematic study of the clergy’s historic role in the witch trials. This will, in some respects, parallel scholarship on the witch trials themselves as the conceptual meeting point between elite and popular culture. However, analysing sermons also constitutes a point of departure and differs in approach from reading trials as it focuses on how preachers structured notions about the devil for a popular audience.¹⁵ Witch trials expressed the result of the development of such ideas and attitudes towards the devil and witchcraft. They were also a relatively infrequent occurrence in everyday life when compared to the frequency of sermons, given the new emphasis on instructing the illiterate through oral preaching on the part of both Protestant and Catholic reformers.¹⁶

¹² Pierrette Paravy, *De la chrétienté romaine à la réforme en Dauphiné: évêques, fidèles et déviants (vers 1340 - vers 1530)*, 2 vols. (Rome: École française de Rome, 1993), p. 791.

¹³ Mormando, *The Preacher’s Demons*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁴ Brian Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 107.

¹⁵ David Ross Winter, “Preaching the Demonic Family in the West Country: An Account of the Devil and his Mother in and Early Thirteenth-Century Example Book from Llanthony Secunda Priory”, in Richard Raiswell and Peter Dendle (eds.), *The Devil in Society in Premodern Europe* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2012), p. 139.

¹⁶ Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ: Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 133.

Methodology and Sources

The preachers analysed in this thesis were characterized by delivering sermons promoting the notion of a demonic conspiracy. They were almost all itinerant preachers who delivered sermons in the context of confessional conflicts between the Catholic Church and heretical sects in the fifteenth century and Protestantism in the sixteenth century. In the fifteenth century, exceptionally trained Dominican friars deployed a sophisticated eschatological theology in order to frame the struggle against heretics as a battle between God and the devil. The stakes were individual salvation and the risk of triggering Judgment Day. Catholic preachers in the sixteenth century used this same argument in order to attack Protestantism. The majority were prolific preachers who deliberately took part in religious polemics in order to establish a demonizing narrative framework that would influence the specific confessional conflicts taking place. Their sermons were recorded and preserved to fulfill this purpose. These preachers provided the critical narrative themes concerning the heresy of rejecting the sacraments. Preachers who delivered eschatological sermons predicting the apocalypse if the Church was allowed to be destroyed relied on the Old Testament in order to validate the religious truth of their message.

In the fifteenth century, prolific preachers who delivered apocalyptic sermons that associated heresy and witchcraft with the devil were the Dominican St. Vincent Ferrer, the Franciscan San Bernardino of Siena and the Dominican Pierre Broussard. Edited versions of their sermons are found in published sources. Ferrer's letters translated from Latin to French explaining his apocalypticism to the Avignon Pope

Benedict XIII and to the Dominican Grand Master Jean de Puinoix are found in D. Fages' *Histoire de saint Vincent Ferrer* published in 1901. Ferrer's sermons delivered in the Alps describing how heretics and practitioners of magic are in league with the devil are published in source books and secondary sources.¹⁷ Most of Ferrer's manuscript sermons were recorded by contemporaries in Latin. Historians have translated his sermons into French, German and Spanish. Franco Morenzioni published edited Latin transcriptions of Ferrer's Montpellier sermons delivered in 1408. Sigmund Brettle's biography of Ferrer includes German translations of Ferrer's Fribourg sermons delivered in 1404. These same Fribourg sermons were published comprehensively in Spanish by Francisco Blay and María Llavata in their annotated source book. In 2010, Josianne Canbanas published a compilation of undated excerpts from Ferrer's sermons. Latin manuscripts of Ferrer's sermons delivered in the Alps are contained in the Franciscan collection of the National Library of Switzerland. Bernardino's sermons that transfer accusations historically made against heretics onto witches are published in translated compilation source books.¹⁸ Broussard's sermons delivered during the witch trials of Arras in 1460 describing the profane and sexually perverted rituals performed at the witches' sabbath were recorded by the chronicler Jacques du Clercq in his

¹⁷ D. Fages, *Histoire de saint Vincent Ferrer* (Paris: Librairie des Archives Nationales, 1901). For Ferrer's Fribourg sermons found in the ms. 62 of the Franciscan Collection of the National Library of Switzerland see Francisco Gimeno Blay and María Luz Mandingorra Llavata (eds.), Daniel Gozalbo Gimeno (trans.), *Sermones de Cuaresma en Suiza, 1404 (Couvent des Cordeliers, ms. 62)* (Valencia: Ajuntament de Valencia, 2009) and Sigismund Brettle, *San Vicente Ferrer und sein literarischer Nachlass* (Munster: Aschendorff, 1924). For his Montpellier sermons: Franco Morenzioni (ed.), "La prédication de Vincent Ferrer à Montpellier en décembre 1408", *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, vol. 74 (2004), pp. 225-271. Edited excerpts of his sermons in Josianne Canbanas (ed), Patrick Gifreu (trans.), *Saint Vincent Ferrer: Sermons* (Perpignan: Éditions de la Merci, 2010).

¹⁸ Bernardino de Siena, *Sermons*, Don Nazareno Orlandi (ed.), Helen Josephine Robins (trans.) (Siena: Tipografia, 1920) and *Prediche volagari sul Campo di Siena* (Firenze 1427), Carlo Delcorno (ed.), 2 vols. (Milan: Rusconi, 1989).

Mémoires.¹⁹

A social comparative approach is used to analyse the demonizing content of their sermons. These sermons are analysed by placing them within social contexts where notions concerning a conspiracy of devil worshippers were articulated. The objective is to establish a correlation between sermons promoting the notion of a demonic conspiracy and expressions of demonism. In the fifteenth century, trials against practitioners of magic begin to include accusations of devil worship c. 1420. Following the trials, theological and demonological literature arguing for the existence of a conspiracy of devil worshippers emerges in the in the 1430s. The Council of Basel (1431-1440) convened to address reforms of the Church created a nexus where the impression that demonic forces were actively conspiring to destroy the Catholic Church was discussed and disseminated.²⁰

The connection between demonizing sermons and expressions of demonism produces an asymmetry in the historical interpretation of the sermons and the actual impact of the preacher's religious message. As the social historian of the Reformation Gerald Strauss has pointed out, sermons could be misinterpreted, and the reception of the religious message could be distorted.²¹ The intention of the preacher and the practical outcome of a religious message are distinct manifestations, and each have separate historical meanings. Quentin Skinner, the historian of ideas, has argued that "to understand a text must be to understand both the intention to be understood, and the

¹⁹ Jacques du Clercq, *Mémoires de J. Du Clercq*, 4 vols. (Paris: Lacrosse, 1823-1825).

²⁰ Michael D. Bailey and Edward Peters, "A Sabbat of Demonologists: Basel, 1431-1440", *The Historian*, vol. 65, no. 6 (Winter 2003), pp. 1375-1395.

²¹ Gerald Strauss, "Success and Failure in the German Reformation", *Past & Present*, no. 67 (May, 1975), p. 51.

intention that this intention should be understood, which the text itself as an intended act of communication must at least have embodied".²² Skinner shows how both linguistic and contextual analyses of ideas expressed in text misrepresent the intention of their writers. These historical approaches interpret the meaning of ideas retroactively by attaching to them semantic meanings and historical events that do not in fact reflect the intention behind these ideas. Mendicant preachers intended their sermons to reform their audiences, to show them how sin, heresy and deviation from Christian teachings will lead them to spiritual and physical suffering in this life and the next. They intended to show them the road to salvation. The creation of a demonic conspiracy was a kind of unintended byproduct of a demonizing rhetoric, as it was formulated in late medieval mendicant sermons. The notions of heresy, harmful magic and demonic agency were presented as threats to individual salvation and the survival of the Church. A complex process involving social dynamics, judicial procedure and theological notions produced the impression that threats against Christian ideals were part of an organized effort to attack the integrity of Christianity, especially Catholic sacraments.²³ Skinner shows how the historical analysis of ideas can distort the meaning they were originally intended to convey. This methodological obstacle is illustrated by the difficulty in establishing a causality between a demonizing rhetoric and religious repression, specifically because this may not have been the intention of the preacher who delivered demonizing sermons. However, this thesis will show how there was a correlation between the people designated as 'demonic' and subsequent repressive actions targeting these people

²² Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas", *History and Theory*, vol. 8, no.1 (1969), p. 48.

²³ Robin Briggs, *The Witches of Lorraine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 31.

specifically because they were ‘demonic’.

This social comparative approach continues to be applied for the sixteenth century during the French Reformation. The Catholic preachers François Le Picart and Simon Vigor, the Franciscan Melchior de Flavin and the Jesuit Emond Auger (1530-1591) delivered demonizing sermons during the French Reformation as unfaltering opponents of Protestantism. Le Picart’s and Vigor’s sermons were published posthumously. They were both renowned preachers in Paris and they were described by their contemporaries as extremely effective in demonizing and combatting Protestantism. Contemporary compilation volumes of Le Picart’s and Vigor’s sermons were published by printers in the French capital where they had preached prolifically. Le Picart’s sermons were published by Nicolas Chesneau in the 1560s.²⁴ Vigor’s sermons were published by Thomas Soubron in the 1590s.²⁵ Unfortunately, Le Picart’s and Vigor’s sermons are not dated. The published versions are each organized around the liturgical calendar concerning the themes of their sermons in successive tomes and volumes. Le Picart’s sermons delivered during the first decades of the French Reformation (1525-1555) are analyzed in chapter 4 in order to establish the eschatological framework leading up to the French Wars of Religion as well as the religious violence directed towards the Huguenots during the civil conflicts.

Melchior the Flavin was a Franciscan preacher in Toulouse who has only left a handful of written works. The content of his sermons is only partially known through

²⁴ François Le Picart, *Les sermons et instructions chretiennes, pour tous les jours de l’Advent, jusques à Noel: & tous les dimanches & fêtes, depuis Noel jusques à Caresme*, vol. 1 (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1566).

²⁵ Simon Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques sur les dimanches et festes depuis l’octave de Pasques jusqu’à l’Advent(...)*, Tome 1 (Paris: Thomas Soubron, 1592).

the works he left and other contemporary sources. Theodore Beza's famous *Histoire Écclésiastique* (1580) describes Flavin as a preacher that was capable of provoking Protestants. Flavin's *Remontrance de la vraye religion au Roy très chrétien Charles IX* published by Nicolas Chesneau in 1562 is a formal grievance to the sovereign.²⁶ This work probably originated from one of his sermons in which he denounces the toleration of heresy and the royal policies of appeasement towards Protestants.

The content of the Jesuit Emond Auger's sermons is only known through contemporary Protestant sources. His incendiary sermons on the eve the massacre of the Protestants of Bordeaux in 1572 are quoted by the Protestant martyrologist Simon Goulart.²⁷ In chapter 5, Goulart's account of Auger's sermons is compared to Auger's written works as well as to the demonological lectures of another Jesuit, Jean Maldonat. These help to confirm Goulart's description of Auger's incendiary sermons praising the massacre of French Calvinists.²⁸

The methodological obstacle facing the historian consists in understanding exactly how sermons were received and understood by the people who heard them. Mack Holt has recently observed that Strauss's observation that what people understood was not necessarily the same thing as what the clergy preached has yet to be resolved.²⁹

²⁶ Melchior de Flavin, *Remontrance de la vraye religion au Roy très chrétien Charles IX* (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1562).

²⁷ Simon Goulart, *Mémoires de l'estat de France sous Charles IX contenant les choses les plus notables, faites et publiées tant par les catholiques que par ceux de la religion, depuis le troisième édit de pacification fait au mois d'Aoust 1570 jusques au règne de Henry troisième, & réduits en trois volumes (...) Tome 1, Seconde partie/second part* (Meidelbour: Henri Wolf, 1578).

²⁸ Émond Auger. *De la vraye, réelle et corporelle présence de Jésus-Christ au Saint Sacrement de l'autel* (Lyon: P. L'Huillier, 1566); Jean Maldonat, *Traité des Anges et Démons (...) mis en françois par Maistre François de la Borie* (Paris: Chez François Haluy, 1605).

²⁹ Mack P. Holt, "The Social History of the Reformation: Recent Trends and Future Agendas", *Journal of Social History*, vol. 37, no. 1 (autumn 2003), p. 140; Strauss, "Success and Failure in the German Reformation", p. 51.

It is clear that in the fifteenth-century Alps, people focused their accusations on practitioners of magic suspected of causing harm, not towards peaceful Waldensian neighbours. However, the prosecution of harmful magic only intensified when the paradigm of a satanic conspiracy began to be more widely disseminated. Accusations of devil worship involving harmful magic consistently began to appear in trials c. 1420. Based on his experience in adjudicating hundreds of cases of witchcraft, the secular judge Claude Tholosan of Dauphiné wrote a judicial tract in 1436 concerning his experience. Tholosan makes clear distinctions between devil worshippers who practice harmful magic and heretics who only commit errors on doctrine. According to Tholosan, practitioners of harmful magic devote themselves to the devil while heretics could still be redeemed. Confessions of witchcraft by ordinary people, often extracted under torture, included graphic descriptions of satanic rituals and physical interactions with demons. While some parts of the confession were clearly prompted by the judicial authorities, people accused of performing curses through demonic agency had enough knowledge and awareness to provide detailed narratives that described their supposed initiation into a satanic cult. However, the lack of sources originating from ordinary people obstructs a comprehensive understanding of how sermons promoting the notion of a satanic conspiracy really operated at the level of accusations between members of the same community.

The demonic pact, expressions of demonism and harmful magic were all notions that had existed during the Middle Ages: “Over this formative period he [the devil] is made and remade in response to new social and political pressures and shifting cultural priorities, occupying different explanatory niches according to the various communities

detecting the stench of his presence”.³⁰ By the fifteenth century, accusations of devil worship already had a long history. However, in the second quarter of the fifteenth century (1425-1450), preachers and inquisitors inspired a transformation.³¹ Heresy, harmful magic and demonism became integrated in a rhetorical framework promoting the existence of devil worshippers whose main objective was to destroy Christianity. The novelty of this concept is that it was applied, on a collective scale, to ordinary people accused of heresy and harmful magic, rather only to religious dissidents or ritual magicians. The new idea of a ‘witches’ sabbath’ took shape during the fifteenth century.

There is a methodological obstacle in establishing a direct causal link between a demonizing discourse and the persecution of religious deviants. However, this thesis will demonstrate how there was a clear correlation between public sermons that targeted groups of people defined as ‘demonic’ and subsequent actions that were intended to eliminate them specifically because they were ‘demonic’. Sermons that demonized people considered to be religious deviants were intended to reform the religious morals and behaviours of the audience in order to prevent them from falling into heresy and witchcraft. However, the elimination of demonic elements corrupting Christian society was a practical outcome of this demonizing discourse.

Rhetoric

By the fifteenth century, the Catholic Church already had an established history of demonizing religious rhetoric. Medieval confessional conflicts between Catholics and Jews, Muslims and heretics had allowed notions such as the demonic pact and secret

³⁰ Richard Raiswell and David R. Winter (eds.), *The Medieval Devil: A Reader* (Readings in Medieval Civilizations and Cultures) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), p. 6.

³¹ Ronald Hutton, *The Witch*, p. 171. Pierrette Paravy, *De la chrétienté romaine*, pp. 790-800.

conspiracies against Christianity to be used as rhetorical weapons against religious and political enemies. The figure of the devil had been used as a rhetorical tool in countless sermons throughout the Middle Ages. Hervé Martin's survey of medieval sermons shows that Catholic preachers referenced the devil in frightening tales with tireless consistency to warn the faithful of the consequences of not following the teachings of the Church.³² In the thirteenth century, the 'art of preaching' discussed in chapter 1 – the *ars praedicandi* – became the dominant model for composing and delivering sermons. *Ars praedicandi* was an approach to the rhetoric of preaching that established the thematic sermon as the most effective method for preachers to convey a religious message to a popular audience. *Ars praedicandi* also refers to the theoretical and practical manuals that instructed preachers how to be effective when composing and delivering sermons. The scholastic approach to sermon composition contained in the practical manuals that instructed preachers in *ars praedicandi* formed a “rhetorical system” that allowed preachers to engage with a popular audience.³³

As a “system”, the art of preaching was a comprehensive approach to religious discourse that was consciously intended to persuade an audience to action, occasionally with unintended and unforeseen outcomes. The sermons and sources examined in this thesis were intended to persuade the audience of the divinity of the sacramental system of the Catholic Church. The rhetorical theories of *ars praedicandi* were based on the ancient tradition of classical rhetoric that was part of the Seven Liberal Arts of the medieval university curriculum. Training in sermon composition and delivery not only

³² Hervé Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur en France septentrionale à la fin du Moyen-Âge: (1350-1520)* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1988), p. 73.

³³ James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1974), p. 342.

included the means to educate the population with religious instruction, but also how to move people to reflect the Christian faith in their daily and spiritual lives. Mendicant preachers were trained in scholastic rhetoric that was built on the two other parts of the trivium, grammar and logic. University students followed classes in rhetoric that integrated the other parts of the curriculum and trained them in the ancient Greek and Roman method of constructing oral arguments providing graduates with the ability to persuade an audience through speech that combined logical, emotional and moral arguments and to move people to action. Aristotle wrote that: “The duty of rhetoric is to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon without arts or systems to guide us, in the hearing of persons who cannot take in at a glance a complicated argument or follow a long chain of reasoning”.³⁴ For Aristotle, rhetoric intervenes in practical matters of choice. Ancient Greek thinkers pointed out that the purpose of rhetoric was to persuade. Aristotle explained the three pillars of persuasion as *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*, which describe how to appeal to an audience through logical arguments, the authenticity or character of the speaker and the elements that resonate emotionally with audiences.³⁵ The great Roman orator Cicero expounded on Greek rhetorical theories by refining the categories of discourse that aim to persuade: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery.³⁶ Cicero echoes Aristotle by focusing on the emotional response of the audience as the most effective approach to persuade through rhetoric. His historically influential *De oratore* (58 BC) illustrates his rhetorical theories through his “bold

³⁴ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, (Rh. 1357a), trans. W. Rhys Roberts (South Bend: Infomotions, Inc., 2000), p. 5.

³⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, (Rh. 1356b) p. 4.

³⁶ John Dugan, “Cicero’s Rhetorical Theories” in Catherine Steel (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 25-40, see p.27.

engagement with Platonic dialogue”.³⁷ Cicero uses dialogue to convey his rhetorical theories within the cultural and social contexts that influence the form and function of how discourse is structured and delivered. Dialogue illustrates the necessary ability to adapt speech to different contexts, whether formal or informal, and its interlocutors, whether peers, superiors or subordinates, and how to adapt discourse to anticipated counterarguments. The rhetorical theorist James A. Herrick notes that the function of rhetoric in the twenty-first century remains persuasion: “Rhetorical discourse often seeks to influence an audience to accept an idea, and then to act.”³⁸ Rhetoric achieves this collective influence to persuade audiences by employing different forms of speech that can be used in combination or used in isolation. Herrick defines four general categories of speech that assist rhetorical discourse that seeks to persuade as: arguments, appeals, arrangement and aesthetics. These modern categories of rhetorical discourse are variations of classical definitions as presented by authors such as Cicero. Late medieval and early modern preachers exploited all these methods and more.

In the thirteenth century, the rhetorical theories of *ars praedicandi* discussed its own specific versions of these methods with a heavy insistence on ‘arrangement’. The complex composition of the thematic sermon was ‘arranged’ using themes and subthemes based on texts from scripture. Lines of reasoning, arguments and interpretations of scripture were woven into the parts of the sermons to make sense of the doctrines being presented. *Exempla*, religious narratives, were integrated into the sermon to illustrate the religious message of the sermon in an impactful and relatable

³⁷ Dugan, “Cicero”, p. 31.

³⁸ James A. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2021), p. 17.

way for the audience. This sophisticated approach to formulate religious rhetoric destined for a popular audience became known as the ‘art of preaching’ as described by its contemporaries as *ars praedicandi*.

After the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, preachers engaged popular audiences by insisting on the sacraments of the Catholic Church to better Christianise the people and to combat heresy. Highly educated itinerant preachers, many of them Dominicans, composed sermons based on the rhetorical theories of *ars praedicandi* emphasizing the divine aspects of Catholic rituals. They delivered thematic sermons explaining the practical and the spiritual benefits of practicing confession, baptism and communion. Integrating *exempla*, religious narratives, that involved the devil was an extremely effective approach in depicting how demonic forces were actively seeking to corrupt the sacraments. These narratives were presented as factual and historical events that illustrated and confirmed the religious message conveyed in the sermon.

Hervé Martin’s analysis also shows how Catholic preachers delivered sermons to Catholic audiences that consistently demonized other religious groups such as Jews, Muslims and heretics in order to portray them, each in different ways, as enemies of the Church. Designating clear enemies that were actively threatening Christianity solidified a sense of Christian identity and a sense of belonging to the Church among the faithful. A rhetoric of religious demonization was defined by the sense of ‘threat’ that it was intended to produce. The identification of a ‘demonic’ threat was the by-product of a religious discourse that sought to define righteous Christian morals, values, beliefs and behaviours. By associating heretics and witches with the devil, a demonizing rhetoric allowed preachers to instruct the faithful by describing what beliefs and behaviours not

to follow. In the fifteenth century, Ferrer preached that heretics who rejected the sacraments were the followers of the Antichrist and Bernardino preached that practitioners of magic cannibalized their own children. In the sixteenth century, Le Picart preached that Protestantism was the ‘religion of the devil’ and Vigor preached that the Huguenots were the ‘ministers of Satan’.

Catholic preachers in the sixteenth century disseminated a corresponding religious rhetoric that separated those who would find salvation within the Catholic Church and those who were outside of it, destined to be condemned. Their sermons during the French Reformation consistently reinforced the notion that Protestants were in league with the devil. The eschatological imperative related to God’s impending Judgment figured largely in Catholic sermons that aimed to oppose all royal policies of appeasement even before the French Wars of Religion broke out in 1562. For Denis Crouzet, there was a precipitous plunge in Catholic discourse towards a “rhetoric of accumulation” in which Protestants were portrayed as the cause of all disasters, all misfortunes and all suffering.³⁹ The Huguenots were demonized by being portrayed as the main vector of religious corruption that was the cause of all suffering during the civil war. Royal edicts had been established to prohibit religious violence and to prevent a civil war. Preachers risked criminal prosecution by actively inciting religious violence. However, they subverted potential accusations by delivering sermons calling for the defense of Catholicism, citing the Old Testament where Moses calls for those who love God to kill His enemies, being aware that fear of the wrath of God for tolerating blasphemy was a powerful motivator for action.⁴⁰ Catholic military factions under the

³⁹ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, Tome 1, p. 167.

⁴⁰ Michel de Castelnau, *Mémoires* (Paris: M. Petitot, 1823), p. 167.

Duke of Guise justified violence against Protestants by asserting that the Huguenots were in defiance of royal edicts that prohibited the practice of Protestant rituals. Catholic preachers disseminated a “rhetoric of violence, a rhetoric awaiting violence”.⁴¹

In sermons, writings, trials and exorcisms, Catholic preachers successfully demonized their religious opponents, whether Waldensian heretics or Protestant Reformers. Moreover, their apocalyptic language inspired fear of the devil’s activity and the wrath of God, leading to real violence against those the people feared most as the precipitant cause of God’s anger: blasphemers and witches. Such sermons played a major role in the creation of the demonic witch stereotype that merged the preachers’ image of heretics threatening Christendom with popular anxiety over harmful magic.

Chronology

While this thesis follows a broad chronological framework, its chapters are organized by the relevant themes related to each period. To assist in comprehension, the first chapter also includes an analysis of the general practice of preaching in the late Middle Ages and an overview of the historiography of the emergence of satanic witchcraft in the fifteenth century. It also discusses the founding of the Franciscan and Dominican orders and their impact on the practice of preaching in the late Middle Ages, emphasizing the use of the ‘devil’ as a rhetorical tool in mendicant sermons. It concludes with an examination of the works of those historians who have analysed the persecution of heretics and witches in the context of the religious reforms initiated by the Council of Basel (1431-1449), extending this discussion into the sixteenth century

⁴¹ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, Tome 1, p. 424.

Reformation, since the artificial boundary between the late medieval and early modern eras that historians have identified as the Reformation can obscure significant continuities in belief and practice, something recently noted by Nicholas Terpstra in his ground-breaking *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World* published in 2015.⁴²

The methodology of chapters 2 and 3 follows a discourse analysis of the content of mendicant sermons of the fifteenth century, with the apocalyptic sermons of Vincent Ferrer the focus of chapter 2. It is argued here that the connections between the demonizing discourse contained in Ferrer's sermons, the inquisitorial repression of heresy and the persecution of practitioners of harmful magic led to the creation of the myth of the witches' sabbath, the alleged satanic gatherings. The ability of Ferrer's sermons to provoke people and to inspire changes in social policies has been noted concerning his itinerant preaching in Spain in the 1410s. In 1411, Ferrer preached in Valladolid that Jews desired and perpetrated the mass murder of Christians. The following year, Ferrer's anti-Semitic sermons inspired the authorities of Valladolid to enact restrictive segregation laws against Jews and Muslims.⁴³ Unable to relocate quickly enough in the prescribed eight days, many Jews died of exposure when they were forced out of their homes, in accordance with the segregation laws. Ferrer's intention was to convert the Jews, not have them die of exposure. However, his preaching was capable of inflaming the religious passions of those who heard his sermons and produce unintended consequences that were potentially deadly.

A decade earlier in the Alps, Ferrer's central intention was to reform the beliefs

⁴² Terpstra, *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World*, p. 84.

⁴³ Philip Daileader, *Saint Vincent Ferrer, His World and Life: Religion and Society in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2016), p. 116.

and behaviours of the inhabitants. Christian salvation was being threatened by heretical Waldensian communities and the prevalence of popular magical rituals. Ferrer's motivation was not necessarily to instigate trials against practitioners of magic accused of devil worship. However, in the context of the fifteenth-century Alps, His sermons demonized heretical sects as well as popular magic in a time and place where inquisitors were already in the process of pursuing Waldensian heretics and where prevalent misfortunes were popularly attributed to the harmful magic of vengeful members of the community.⁴⁴ Ferrer delivered sermons associating Waldensian heretics with the Antichrist and he warned his audiences that demons brought people who practiced magical rituals straight to hell. Ferrer's sermons injected the notion of demonic agency into efforts to suppress heresy and popular magic. The combination of the notions of demonic agency, conspiratorial sects and harmful magic constituted the central definition of the new construct of a satanic witch cult that was later used in witch trials of the 1420s and in the demonological literature that emerged in the 1430s, in Switzerland and Dauphiné in particular.⁴⁵

The demonizing rhetoric of medicant preachers intensified during the fifteenth century. The internal political debates responding to the move of the papacy to Avignon in 1307 and the Papal Schism from 1378 to 1417 within the Catholic Church were

⁴⁴ Kathrin Utz Tremp, "The Heresy of Witchcraft in Western Switzerland and Dauphiné", *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, vol. 6, no. 1 (summer 2010), p. 5. See also her *Von Der Häresie Zur Hexerei: "wirkliche" Und Imaginäre Sekten Im Spätmittelalter* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2008).

⁴⁵ Pierrette Paravy, "Remarques sur les passages de saint Vincent Ferrer dans les vallées vaudoises (1399-1403)", *Croyances religieuses et société alpine* (Bulletin de la société d'études des Hautes Alpes, 1985-86), p. 155.

expressed in demonological and eschatological terminology.⁴⁶ The question of demonic agency became a political weapon used during the Conciliarist dispute. Conciliarism was a reform movement within the Catholic Church that sought to transfer the decision-making powers of the Church from the single authority of the pope to the collective authority of a council. The Council of Basel (1431-1440) was convened to address proposed reforms of the Church to ensure such an embarrassment as the schism would not reoccur. At the council, pro-conciliarists members of the clergy proposed that the authority of the Catholic Church be deferred to a Church council rather than rest in the single authority of the pope. Many friars who wrote works promoting the existence of a sect of devil worshippers were pro-conciliarists.⁴⁷ Opponents on each side of the dispute accused each other of devil worship in order to discredit their opponents' positions and validate their own.

Chapter 3 will examine how fifteenth-century mendicant friars and inquisitors helped to disseminate the notion of a conspiracy of devil worshippers. Historian Ronald Hutton has recently argued that the Italian Franciscan preacher, Bernardino of Siena, delivered sermons that explicitly led to trials for demonic witchcraft in 1427.⁴⁸ He was accused of heresy in 1426 for his promotion in his sermons of the monogram of the first letters in the name of Jesus – IHS – in Gothic letters on a blazing sun, to inspire devotion to the cult of the name of Jesus. He was able to overcome these accusations of heresy and convince the authorities of his own orthodoxy. Franco Mormando has shown

⁴⁶ Frances Courtney Kneupper, "Conciliarist Employment of Eschatology during and after the Council of Basel (1431-1460)" in Mathieu Caesar (ed.), *Factional Struggles: Divided Elites in European Cities & Courts (1400-1750)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 68.

⁴⁷ Michael D. Bailey and Edward Peters, "A Sabbat of Demonologists: Basel, 1431-1440", *The Historian*, vol. 65, no. 6 (Winter 2003), pp. 1375-1395.

⁴⁸ Hutton, *The Witch*, p. 172.

that it was at this point that Bernardino, perhaps seeking to project guilt onto another target, began preaching against devil worshipping witches.⁴⁹ Bernardino's chronology is in contrast to historians who have focused on Nider's *Formicarius* as providing the first chronological mention of this myth c. 1406; it is now suggested that Nider's story may have better suited a post-1426 period. Chapter 3 then examines how Nider's *exempla* were based on confessions of accused witches which helped to define these practices and how these *exempla* reflect demonological notions that were first preached in mendicant sermons. These ideas, first found in sermons, later appeared in witch trials and were then incorporated into the demonological literature. The sermons Bernardino delivered in his hometown of Siena in 1427 described how Waldensian heretics made powders out of unbaptized babies in order to make a profane liquid that made the person who ingested it unable to reveal the secrets of their sect. He later preached that a witch had murdered her own children to make powders and liquids that were used to transform herself into a cat. A very similar accusation is later found in Nider's *Formicarius*. Nider describes how a judge named Peter informed him how a woman accused of witchcraft in Bern had confessed that members of her sect practice the cannibalism of children and make powders and liquids out of them that they use in their satanic ceremonies.⁵⁰ The parallels between these accounts show how practices used to demonize medieval heretics were transferred onto devil worshipping witches.

Guillaume Adeline's case is just one of many revealing how accusations of devil worship could be weaponized to discredit political opponents and to confirm the reality

⁴⁹ Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons*, p. 105.

⁵⁰ Catherine Chène, "Jean Nider: *Formicarius*", Martine Ostorero, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, Kathrin Utz Tremp (eds.), *L'imaginaire du sabbat: édition critique des textes les plus anciens (1430 c. - 1440 c.)* (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 1999), p. 155.

of the witches' sabbath. It also shows how questions of Church politics and orthodoxy were expressed in demonological terminology. Adeline was an itinerant preacher who allegedly delivered public sermons in 1438 against the reality of secret nocturnal gatherings of devil-worshipping heretics, calling it a delusion in accordance with the canon *Episcopi* from the tenth century. Adeline was also openly opposed to conciliarism and supported the authority of the pope. In 1453, he was put on trial, and he was made to confess that the devil had ordered him to preach that the witches' sabbath was a delusion and he was condemned as a devil worshipper.⁵¹ His condemnation allowed the authorities to discredit his heretical sermons against the reality of a demonic conspiracy as well as his anti-conciliarism.

The case of Adeline was discussed by chroniclers and demonologists as evidence of the existence of a demonic conspiracy and to show how an ordained preacher could be corrupted by the devil. Jacques du Bois, the dean of the cathedral of Arras, discussed this case in the context of the witch hunt of Arras of 1460.⁵² The public sermons of the Dominican Pierre le Broussard during the trials of Arras projected these demonizing notions onto devil-worshipping witches, emphasizing the desecration of the sacraments. Broussard preached that the devil ordered his followers to not go to church, to not hear mass and to not take holy water or to go to confession.⁵³ The notion that those who attack and destroy the sacraments were devil worshippers was a rhetorical theme that

⁵¹ Martine Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat: Littérature démonologique et sorcellerie (1440-1460)* (Florence: Sismel, 2011), p. 656

⁵² Andrew Colin Gow, Robert B. Desjardins, and François V. Pageau, *The Arras Witch Treatises: Johannes Tinctor's Invectives contre la secte de vauderie and the Recollectio casus, status et condicionis Valdensium ydolatrarum by the Anonymous of Arras (1460)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

⁵³ Jacques du Clercq, *Mémoires de J. Du Clercq*, vol. 3, Book IV, chapter 4 (Paris: Lacrosse, 1823), pp. 21-22.

had historically been used against medieval heretics. In the fifteenth century, this notion was used in both sermons and demonological literature in order to establish the existence of sect of devil-worshipping witches.

This notion culminated at the end of the fifteenth century with the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* published in 1486 by the Dominican inquisitor Henrich Kramer. This work helped to establish the contemporary gendered perception of the ‘female witch’ at the end of the Middle Ages. Kramer describes how women become seduced, corrupted and recruited by the devil through their sexually insatiable and perverted appetites. According to Kramer, true intellectual heresy, the rejection of Catholic doctrines, was committed by men, while harmful magic performed through the demonic pact was committed by women.⁵⁴

Subsequent chapters pursue this social comparative approach through the Reformation period. Informed by Denis Crouzet’s argument that Catholic violence directed toward French Protestants was based on a widespread popular feeling of eschatological anguish, the analysis in chapters 4 and 5 is focused on the apocalyptic sermons of preachers like Le Picart which reveal how their rhetorical strategy was built on the work of their fifteenth-century predecessors to defend the sacramental powers of the Catholic clergy against Protestant attacks by exposing the demonic nature of French Protestantism.⁵⁵ Chapter 4 focuses on how in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, the Parisian preacher François Le Picart (1504-1556) delivered sermons announcing the apocalypse and the threat of demonic corruption posed by French Protestants.⁵⁶ Le

⁵⁴ Herzig, “Flies, Heretics and the Gendering of Witchcraft”, p. 53.

⁵⁵ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, Tome 1, p. 235.

⁵⁶ Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-vers 1610)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seyssel, 1990), p. 93.

Picart delivered sermons saying that Protestant heresy was the ‘religion of the devil’. He relied heavily on the Old Testament as a prophetic warning that if France was allowed to fall into heresy, God’s anger would destroy the kingdom and everyone in it. The Dominican Vincent Ferrer had also heavily relied on the Old Testament while preaching a similar paradigm over a century earlier. Le Picart’s main argument against heresy was a defense of Catholic sacraments, especially against Protestant attacks on the sacramental powers of absolution wielded by Catholic priests and on the ‘real’ presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Le Picart preached to his audiences that these attacks “all proceed from the devil of hell”.⁵⁷

Chapter 5 analyses how the religious massacres during the French Reformation reflected the demonizing rhetoric of Catholic preachers, just as Ferrer’s had inspired attacks on Jews in Spain in 1415 and San Bernardino’s the new attacks on witches in Italy in the 1420s. In 1562, the confessional conflicts in France culminated in the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598), a series of military conflicts that were fought over the existence of Protestantism within the kingdom.⁵⁸ French Calvinists were viciously slaughtered during the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in 1572, reflecting the eschatological and demonizing rhetoric of Catholic preachers such as Simon Vigor (1515-1575). In the sermons he delivered during the 1560s and 1570s, Vigor called for the violent extermination of Protestant heretics within the kingdom.⁵⁹ French Calvinists were pejoratively called ‘Huguenots’ after King Huguet whose ghost haunted good

⁵⁷ François Le Picart, *Les sermons et instructions chretiennes pour tous les jours de l'advent*, vol. 2 (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1567), p. 239.

⁵⁸ Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵⁹ Barbara Diefendorf, “Simon Vigor, A Radical Preacher in Sixteenth Century Paris”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 18, no. 3 (Autumn, 1987), pp. 399-410.

Christians at night. During the civil conflicts, the Huguenots engaged in open acts of rebellion, insurrections and acts of religious desecration. In celebration of their victories after taking a city in an armed coup, they destroyed churches and Catholic religious icons. In retaliation, Catholic soldiers and ordinary subjects alike massacred entire populations of French Calvinists. The most famous example is the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572 when around 2,000 Huguenots were viciously killed in the streets of Paris.

The consciences of those who participated in the massacres were guided by Catholic preachers who delivered sermons warning of God's anger and impending Judgment. During the civil conflicts, Vigor delivered inflammatory sermons in the French capital emphasizing the Huguenots' open acts of rebellion as evidence of their treasonous nature. Moreover, he stressed how these heretics were 'the ministers of Satan'.⁶⁰ Why else would they destroy churches and desecrate the Host – the body of Christ? For Vigor, only the followers of Satan would rebel against the sovereign and risk the collective salvation of loyal Catholic subjects.

Chapter 6 examines how in parallel with the religious conflicts, occurrences of witch trials and dramatic cases of demonic possession mirrored the demonological discourse of preachers who framed the struggle against Protestantism as a battle against the devil. In Toulouse, the Huguenots failed on a grand scale to take the city in an armed coup in May 1562. Leading up to the riot, religious tensions had been exacerbated by the Franciscan preacher Melchior de Flavin who had been delivering sermons against royal policies of appeasement. Flavin preached that Protestant heretics were allied with

⁶⁰ Simon Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques sur les dimanches et festes depuis l'octave de Pasques jusqu'à l'Advent (...)* Tome 1 (Paris: Thomas Soubron, 1592), p. 26.

the devil and that the toleration of heresy would bring down God's judgment. In the city of Albi in 1551, Flavin was almost killed when a riot broke out as he was delivering one of his sermons against Protestants. The violence directed toward the preacher shows how sermons had a powerful impact on those who heard them.⁶¹ Following the Huguenots' failed attempt to take the city, the Parlement of Toulouse severely punished the Protestant insurrectionists for the crime of 'sedition'. A few months later, in the nearby diocese of Couserans, forty women were put on trial for crimes involving harmful magic. In the context of the confessional conflicts, the witch hunt of Couserans was a form of religious purification and social cleansing. In their judgments of these cases of witchcraft, the judges of the Parlement of Toulouse ordered the bishop of Couserans to send "competent preachers" who were not suspected of heresy in order to properly Christianize the people within his diocese.⁶² The judgements rendered by the judges of the Parlement show that they associated religious deviance – heresy and witchcraft – with political treason.

The demonizing propaganda disseminated by the Catholic clergy also took the form of public exorcisms. The divine power of Catholic sacraments, contested by French Calvinists, was put on full display for large crowds to witness. In 1566, the Dominican Pierre de la Motte exploited Nicole Obry's demonic possession in order to demonstrate the religious truth of the powers of the sacramental consecration of the

⁶¹ Megan Armstrong, *Politics of Piety: Franciscan Preachers During the Wars of Religion, 1560-1600* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2004), p. 25.

⁶² ADHG, B, Parlement de Toulouse, Arrêts criminels, reg 85, printed in Jean-François Le Nail, "Procédure contre des sorcières de Seix en 1562", *Bulletin de la société ariègeoise des sciences, lettres et arts*, vol. 31, (1976), p. 183.

bread and holy water.⁶³ The consecrated Host and water were able to compel Nicole's demons to speak through her, and ultimately to depart. The crowds were able to witness firsthand the religious truth of the doctrine of transubstantiation despite the contrary opinion of Protestants. The dramatic public exorcisms allowed people to participate in a ritual usually performed in private and the visual impact of Nicole's performances validated the doctrine of transubstantiation. Her public exorcisms were a kind of 'live sermon' that visually demonstrated to the audience the efficacy of Catholic sacraments. The many accounts of Nicole's deliverance through the power of the Catholic clergy to exorcise the demon were a form of religious propaganda that portrayed Protestants as the followers of Satan. Protestants denied the sacramental powers of Catholic priests despite clear evidence established by Nicole's successful exorcism. Accounts that chronicled these events emphasized the Protestant attacks against the religious truth of Catholic sacraments. Catholic preachers had consistently referred to Protestants' rejection of the sacraments as evidence that they were in league with the devil.⁶⁴

Whether intended or not, the demonization of French Protestants helped escalate popular violence after the outbreak of the French Wars of Religion in 1562. Vigor and other Catholic preachers opposed policies of appeasement and edicts of toleration and their calling Protestants "the ministers of Satan" justified their violent extermination in the minds of many Catholics.⁶⁵ Such demonizing discourse led directly to violence. The

⁶³ Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 36.

⁶⁴ Jean Boulaese, *Le manuel de l'admirable victoire du corps de Dieu sur l'esprit maling Beelzebub obtenue à Laon 1566* (Liège: H. Houins, 1598), p. 86.

⁶⁵ Simon Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques sur les dimanches et festes depuis l'octave de Pasques jusqu'à l'Advent (...)* (Paris: Thomas Soubron, 1592); See Barbara Diefendorf, "Simon Vigor, A Radical Preacher in Sixteenth Century Paris", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn, 1987), pp. 399-410.

people also projected their preachers' descriptions of demonic agents onto those they truly feared: local witches. This was not intended by Catholic preachers, but it is clear from the available evidence that they could not control how their audiences interpreted their sermons.⁶⁶ Such a process, this thesis concludes, can be inferred from the witch trials of 1562 in the diocese of Couserans following an attempted armed coup by Protestants to take the nearby city of Toulouse and the dramatic case of demonic possession of Nicole Obry in 1566. In the latter of these examples, consecrated Hosts played a significant role.

The analysis of the demonizing rhetoric disseminated in Catholic sermons during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries highlights the corresponding approach preachers employed to suppress heresy and religious deviation between the late medieval and early modern periods. The insistence on the divinity of the sacramental system, the association of heresy and magic with the devil and the prophetic warnings concerning the apocalypse can all be traced in sermons delivered in the fifteenth century and through the Reformation period of the sixteenth century. During the French Reformation Catholic preachers refined and adopted strategies already established by late medieval mendicant preachers against medieval heretics and witches. As Protestant Reformers attacked the Catholic priesthood and sacramental theology, Catholic preachers followed the same demonizing strategy of their predecessors. The reliance on a demonizing rhetoric against Protestantism previously used to discredit medieval religious deviants

⁶⁶ Robert Scribner and Gerald Strauss have both shown how religious messages in the oral culture of the sixteenth century could be misinterpreted by the audience. See Robert W. Scribner, "Oral Culture and the Diffusion of Reformation Ideas", *History of European Ideas*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1984), pp. 237-256, see p. 252. Gerald Strauss, "Success and Failure in the German Reformation", *Past & Present*, vol. 67, no.1 (May 1975), pp. 30-63, see p. 51.

shows that there was a great deal of continuity in how Catholic clergymen reacted to perceived threats to the integrity of the Church and attacks against the sacraments. The religious reforms proposed by conciliarists, the demonizing rhetoric constructed to discredit political and religious enemies and the judicial and inquisitorial repression of religious deviants in the fifteenth century were all trends that were paralleled in the sixteenth century. The demonization of Protestantism in Catholic sermons, the religious violence committed against French Calvinists and the beliefs tied to the existence of an underground conspiracy of devil worshippers in the sixteenth century all show that there was a great deal of continuity in this strategy between the late medieval and the early modern periods.⁶⁷ Terpstra notes that: “Fear of the devil increased markedly from the early fifteenth century. Theologians, jurists, and inquisitors began writing more frequently on the subject as they wrestled to understand threats like the Hussite and Lollard Heresies”.⁶⁸ Terpstra shows how the Catholic response to religious corruption during the Reformation was established during the fifteenth century.

This thesis will thus trace the progression of the demonizing discourse against heretics and witches found mainly in mendicant sermons in the fifteenth century and then against French Protestants in the sixteenth century in the context of confessional conflicts. My methodology compares the practice of preaching about the devil in France and occurrences of persecution and violence against religious deviants – heretics and witches. By analysing the demonological elements found in sermons with a social historical approach that carefully scrutinises demonizing rhetoric in its historical context and comparing them with manifestations of religious repression and violence, my

⁶⁷ Mark Greengrass, *Christendom Destroyed: Europe 1517-1648* (London: Penguin, 2014), p. 259.

⁶⁸ Terpstra, *Religious Refugees*, p. 53.

dissertation shows how these were linked and how the patterns of persecution corresponded to preaching about the conspiratorial activities of the devil and his minions.

Chapter 1 - Preachers and the Devil: the Art of Persuasion in Late-Medieval Europe

As previously noted, the figure of the devil became a major concern for the Catholic Church in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. Some members of the clergy, such as mendicant preachers, associated activities of heretical sects, the magical practices of ordinary people, and religious deviance in general with the work of the devil. This idea was used to justify the persecution of heretics and practitioners of magic by both the Church and secular authorities. The idea that the devil was the architect of a vast anti-Christian conspiracy became credible in the face of challenges confronted by the Church. One of its responses was to warn the Christian population of these dangers. This message was mainly transmitted through preachers who demonized beliefs, practices and individuals that were considered a religious threat. By analyzing the practice of preaching in the late medieval and the early modern periods in conjunction with the historiography concerning the fusion of heresy and harmful magic that created the myth of a conspiracy of devil-worshippers, it will be possible to show how the figure of the devil became instrumental for preachers in shaping the religious beliefs and behaviours of their audience. This chapter will examine how the founding of the Franciscan and Dominican orders in the thirteenth century had a profound impact on the practice of preaching. Preaching friars helped to develop more sophisticated methods of composing and delivering sermons which transformed this practice into a profession that required a high level of knowledge acquired through a long process of study and education. The establishment of *ars praedicandi* in the thirteenth century provided the “rhetorical system” preachers used to compose and deliver sermons to a popular

audience.¹ These preachers found new ways to instruct the faithful and transmit their message by both relying on their learned knowledge of scripture and understanding the lives of ordinary people and points of reference that resonated with popular culture. The figure of the devil became a powerful rhetorical tool in their approach to reform the morals of the faithful and make accessible sophisticated theological notions that their audiences could understand. This chapter will also review the work of historians who have analysed the emergence of satanic magic in the fifteenth century. Historians have shown that the inquisitorial repression of Waldensian heretics and the demonization of popular magical practices merged into the notion that there existed a vast demonic conspiracy seeking to destroy Christianity. These points will be demonstrated in the context of the relevant historical events that helped to shape these notions, such as the conciliarist debate – the authority of a Church council vs. the power invested in a single authoritative pope – formally deliberated at the Council of Basel (1431-1449), the emergence of demonological literature and the beginning of trials involving accusations of devil worship.

1.1 – Professional Preachers

The increase in preaching during the late Middle Ages is mainly attributed to the founding of the Franciscan and Dominican orders: “the two orders most responsible for the explosion of preaching”.² Francis of Assisi was relatively young, in his late twenties, when his personal example inspired others to imitate his way of life. The son of a wealthy merchant, he gave up ambitions of knighthood and nobility in order to practice

¹ James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1974), p. 342.

² O.C. Edwards, Jr., *A History of Preaching*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), vol. 1, p. 214.

a simple spiritual life. He embraced the apostolic life by living in poverty, praying constantly and showing love to social outcasts to the point of kissing the sores of lepers. He believed in a literal reading of the Gospel and its injunctions to the point that he rebuilt decayed churches with his own hands. “[Francis] was not an organizer and administrator; he was much more an envisionser, and even before he died it had become obvious that it would be as easy to institutionalize his vision as to domesticate a rainbow”.³ Francis’ order was approved in 1209.

On the other hand, Dominic Guzman was in his mid-forties when he established his order. Dominic was a scholar and trained as an Augustinian canon where he learned the ideal of the apostolic life. In 1206, he accompanied the bishop Diego of Acevedo on his travels throughout France. In the company of Dominic, Diego met with a council of archbishops and the legate of Pope Innocent in Languedoc in a time and place when the heresy of the Cathars was viewed as a serious threat to the Church. On Diego’s advice, the archbishops renounced all their wealth and property in order to demonstrate their faith. Diego convinced them that in order to compete with the heretical preaching of the Cathars, it was necessary to match their example of apostolic living. Diego died two years later and it was left up to Dominic to continue their ‘crusade’ against heretics. Pope Honorius III recognized Dominic’s order in 1216. It was the pope himself who recommended that they be called the order of preaching brothers.⁴

The Franciscan and Dominican orders often get lumped together. However, the impulse that led Francis and Dominic to become the founders of their respective religious orders differed. “It is quite clear that the initial motivation of [Francis’s]

³ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, p. 214.

⁴ Edwards, *A history of preaching*, p. 215.

preaching is basically the recognition that it is part of the whole programme of Luke 10. (...) Diego and Dominic, by contrast, start preaching because preaching is needed".⁵ In the early thirteenth century, in principle only bishops were authorised to preach. Parochial and parish priests who preached sermons usually had the approval of their bishop and their authority to preach had thus been delegated. Unlicensed and unauthorized preachers became an issue for the bishops who were tasked with naming suitable preachers. The wealthy merchant Peter Valdo and his followers, who became known as the Waldensians, were excommunicated in 1184 and formally declared to be heretics in 1215 during the Fourth Lateran Council. They were condemned in part because Valdo and his followers were preaching without formal authorization from the bishop, and delivering sermons encouraging people to read translated versions of the Bible. It was in this context of uncertain standards and the lack of universally accepted criteria concerning who was allowed to preach and what they could preach that the preaching orders were born. In 1221, Dominicans received from Pope Honorius III the authority to preach everywhere.

In the practice of preaching from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, we can observe two striking facts: the continued development of preachers' areas of work and how their interventions became the prime attraction in localities. Across Christian Europe, preachers gave sermons with the full compliance of the people. Hervé Martin's historical survey of medieval preachers shows that late medieval sermons were a social occurrence of capital importance because they brought whole communities together,

⁵ Simon Tugwell, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1982), p.18. Luke 10:2 discusses 70 disciples sent out by Jesus to spread His ministry.

urban and rural.⁶ Moreover, the merit attached to the position of the mendicant friar, the archetype of the medieval preacher, was demonstrated through a concern for pedagogical instruction, sometimes to the extreme. Exploiting people's feelings of guilt and their fear of eternal damnation in order to reform the moral and religious behaviours of their audience was a strategy many preachers adopted. This concern was also regimented by a righteous moral rigour. Invoking the calamities of the period and taking into account the hardships that affected people provided a rationalization for the preacher's moral message. Preachers took on a variety of roles: they were most often mendicant friars, some of whom also acted as inquisitors, and they were the agents of the religious and spiritual instruction of the masses. They wielded an almost total monopoly over the "official" religious discourse, and were thus susceptible to attracting crowds.⁷

In order to preach effectively, preachers subjected themselves to a very long intellectual training process. They were constrained and ethically bound to respect established rules of procedure demanded by their profession. Preaching was an occupation situated at the summit of professional vocations. Theology was a prestigious subject of study at the University of Paris. Licenced preaching friars were a small elite who first completed a degree in the liberal arts, then in theology. However, not everyone was guaranteed a position among the exclusive profession of preachers. Attending a recognized university was the first step, usually in the faculty of arts, before attending the faculty of theology. This could take many years, especially to reach the level of *ordo*

⁶ Hervé Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur en France septentrionale à la fin du Moyen-Âge: (1350-1520)* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1988), p.73.

⁷ Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur*, p. 615.

praedicatorum, ordo doctorum. This avenue towards a doctorate of theology and a licence to preach was usually undertaken by Dominican friars who were usually required to also obtain episcopal authorization to preach publicly.⁸ An affirmed preacher could obtain his bachelor's degree between the ages of twenty and thirty approximately; his licence, between thirty-five and forty, sometimes more. Only after that, when he received the hard earned "round bonnet" of a doctor of theology, was he then authorized to edify the good people through his sermons. It is clear that in the late Middle Ages, speculative theology was an occupation reserved for someone of advanced years. In the vast majority of cases, they were certified by a faculty of theology, which had granted them the bachelor, the licence and the bonnet of the doctor. They endeavored to imitate the apostles and advance their careers by climbing the levels of knowledge and the echelons of notoriety. In a way, they can be compared to master-artisans who were only authorised to practice their craft by the jury members of their corporations. At every level, preachers were subjected to mechanisms of control during their education and careers, concerning their acquired knowledge, the works they could use, their oratory techniques and the conditions required to practice their profession.⁹ These preachers trained in advanced theology can be contrasted to parochial priests who received a basic education in scripture, looked after the sacramental needs of their congregation and delivered sermons that resembled a catechism lesson.¹⁰

By the end of the Middle Ages, prestigious university degrees conferred recognition to those who earned them. Having attended a renowned *studium* provided

⁸ Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur*, p. 129.

⁹ Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur*, p. 616

¹⁰ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, p. 219.

the preacher with the required canonical knowledge and opened the door to become recognized and distinguished. A sacred mission awaited them: they had to be well prepared and respect the rules of their profession, as the preacher was chosen to be in a permanent combat against the devil. One of his roles was to act as a watchdog against the great enemy of Christianity. In theory, preachers fiercely combatted vice and sin, being armed only with Christian virtues: poverty, humility, the truth and most of all, austerity. Being tenacious and resolute against the temptations of the devil, preachers held an exceptional place in the late medieval Church. Preaching friars were trained to see themselves engaged in an unending battle against the devil who was attempting to claim as many souls as possible before the Final Judgement, which many believed would be very soon. The personal annotation in the Bible of King John II the Good of France (1319-1364) tells us that:

Because thus by martyr and by virginity we have a very perfect victory over the world of the flesh, also by doctrines of salvation we obtain a very perfect victory over the devil (...) Certainly the devil has no greater enemies than the good doctors and saintly preachers because by the evangelical doctrine many sinners convert and through the sermons and preaching the people come to contrition and repentance of their sins and chase away the enemy.¹¹

With a strategic speech, the preacher made doctrines accessible to a large audience that had been polished and refined over centuries, grounded in scholarly theological writings. In this sense, the preacher was the official spokesman of the holy gospels, of his predecessors' religious philosophies, and above all else, the instrument of conversion

¹¹ "Car ainsi que par le martyre et la par virginité on a très parfaite victoire du monde et de char, aussi par salutaire doctrine on obtient très parfaite victoire du dyable (...) Certes le dyable n'a point de plus grans ennemis que les bons docteurs et sains percheurs car par la doctrine evangelique plusieurs pecheurs se convertissent et aux sermons et prédications les personnes viennent à contrition et à repentance de leurs péchés et boutent hors l'ennemi." In *Bible moralisée de Jean le Bon (between 1340-1350)*: BNF fr. 167, f° 53 v. Illuminated manuscript of Jean II the Good of France (1319-1364), cited in H. Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur*, p. 197.

of the masses. Medieval preachers were represented as the agents of God, and as divine intercessors for the faithful. Humbert of the Romans, the head of the Dominican order in the thirteenth century, wrote that “The preacher is the voice of Christ in this world.”¹² The success of mendicant preachers inspired many municipalities to remunerate the occupation of preaching by hiring regular secular or parochial priests, recognizing this vocation as deserving a salary. Sermons on repentance with an insistence on culpability became more frequent during times of catastrophes: famines, plagues, and wars. Such subjects edified the masses and became ubiquitous in the late Middle Ages.

1.2 – Medieval Sermons as the Art of Persuasion

In his survey of medieval sermons, Jean Longère defines preaching as a public speech based on a specific divine revelation in the context of an organized social framework, aimed at creating or developing faith and religious knowledge, and correlatively, at the conversion or the spiritual progress of the members of the audience.¹³ In order to accomplish these goals, the practice of preaching implicitly assumed that the preacher would be addressing a relatively open minded audience, with no absolute limit in the number of audience members. Without question, an effective preacher needed to have an intuitive ability to adapt to his public. According to the Franciscan rule of 1223 (*regula bullata*), sermons were technically required to be brief, however this precept was not always followed. In the late Middle Ages, sermons tended

¹² M.-P. Champetier, “Fais et gestes du prédicateur dans l’iconographie du XIIIe au début du XVe siècle” *Médiévale*, no. 1617 (1989), p. 199.

¹³ J. Longère, *La prédication médiévale* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1983), p. 12.

to become longer and thus required a more complex structure.¹⁴ As the founder of the Franciscan Order, St. Francis of Assisi proclaimed:

I also admonish and exhort these brothers that in their preaching, their words be well chosen and chaste (Psalms 11:7; 17:31) for the instruction and edification of the people, speaking to them of vices and virtues, punishment and glory in a discourse that is brief, because it was in few words that the Lord preached while on earth.¹⁵

Clearly, preachers were aware of the importance of their work and its potential impact, as they were actively seeking to indoctrinate ordinary people for their own good and to save their souls. The Franciscan preacher Petrus of Boves (1368-1425) wrote on the efficacy of preaching:

To preach to modern sinners, we send day to day diverse preachers who do not cease to preach the Word of God in the churches and at the time of Lent. Oh how it is great the efficacy of preaching! Oh how it is useful to attend sermons!¹⁶

The faithful's force of resistance to the temptations of the devil was found in the sermons they heard. What would the world be without sermons? The Franciscan preacher Michel Menot (1440-1518) asked this same question:

If we ever eliminate preaching, what will the simple people do who will not know what to do, nor avoid, for the salvation of their souls? There will be no knowledge of paradise nor hell. (...) The young girl who is confined to her room and is tempted by the devil [to accomplish] the sin of the flesh, with what sword or stick will she be able to resist the enemy, if not by the Word of God?¹⁷

¹⁴ Saint Francis [of Assisi], Regis J. Armstrong, Ignatius C. Brady (eds.), *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), p. 107.

¹⁵ Saint Francis, "Chapter IX: Preachers", in *Francis and Clare*, p. 143.

¹⁶ "Pour prêcher aux pêcheurs modernes, on envoie de jour en jour divers prédicateurs qui ne cessent pas de prêcher la Parole de Dieu dans les églises et en temps de Carême. Ô qu'elle est grande l'efficacité de la prédication! Ô qu'il est utile d'aller aux sermons!" Petrus of Boves, Sermones, "*de opere magistri Petri ad Boves, ordinis Fratrum minorum, de dominicis et sanctis*" (Sorbonne Library, ms. 747, f° 113 v.) cited in H. Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur*, p. 597.

¹⁷ "Si on supprime même la prédication, que fera le simple peuple qui ne saura que faire, ni qu'éviter, pour le salut de son âme? Il n'aura connaissance ni du paradis ni de l'enfer (...) La jeune fille qui tient dans sa chambre et qui est tentée par le diable [d'accomplir] le péché de la chair, avec quel glaive ou

Popular sermons were commonplace in the late Middle Ages and were the most widespread literary genre of the period. Antony of Padua (1195-1231), Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419), Bernardino of Sienna (1380-1444) and, of course many other famous preachers, all wrote their major works in this literary genre. As Jean Longère points out, all these works would not have been preserved and transmitted if they had not fulfilled a pastoral necessity and satisfied the expectations of the faithful.¹⁸ The sermon was the indispensable tool of Christianisation; it was through sermons that preachers educated lay people on what they were required to believe and how they were expected to behave.¹⁹ Through rhetorical techniques specific to sermons, preachers exploited a combination of methods in order to achieve their aims. Preachers held three critical goals in mind when composing their sermons: to *reach*, to *persuade* and to *compel*.²⁰

This process was governed by the subject matter which made up the content of the sermon, while the explicit objective was to achieve a degree of authority over the minds and behaviours of the faithful. This power of influence was acquired through the fact that preachers were the only ones authorised to interpret biblical and patristic texts used to compose sermons. In theory, preachers were equipped with the knowledge and the precise training to know how to convey scripture properly to the audience. Alan of

quel bâton pourrait-elle résister à l'ennemi, si ce n'est par la parole de Dieu?" BNF, ms fr. 9611 (*Mélange Théologique*), this manuscript is a compilation of a handful of sermons by Franciscan Friars Jean Barthélémy and Michel Menot et al. Cited in H. Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur*, p. 603.

¹⁸ J. Longère, "La prédication médiévale" in *La Maison-Dieu* (no. 177, 1989), p.50.

¹⁹ Most Europeans, apart from Jews, were almost all members of the Catholic Church by the late Middle Ages; they typically knew very little about official religion, such as dogmas, doctrines and official Church policies. See Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's brilliant study of a community visited by inquisitors because its inhabitants had been easily converted to Catharism while many still believing themselves to be Catholics, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

²⁰ Patrick Snyder, *Représentations de la femme et chasse aux sorcières, XIIIe-XVe siècle, lecture des enjeux théologiques et pastoraux* (Paris: Éditions Fides, 2000), p. 102.

Lille (1114-1203), who was a brilliant professor who eventually became the president (*recteur*) of the University of Paris, gives us his own definition of preaching, certainly demonstrating its importance: “Preaching is a public and collective teaching of behaviours and of the faith, in view to instruct men, supported by reason drawn from sources of authority”.²¹ Alan of Lille’s definition reveals the double nature of theology; theology conveys both a rationale and a morality to beliefs and behaviours. Rational theology reveals knowledge on the nature of God, while moral theology teaches the faithful what duties they must accomplish. Moreover, this definition traces the process that preachers followed in order to edify their audience all the while integrating biblical texts, exegesis and the rational arguments of Church Fathers.

Inspiring religious devotion was part of the ‘art of convincing’ and was an effective method used by preachers to deliver their message. Nicole Bériou’s analysis of Ranulphe de la Houblonnière (1225?-1288) shows that his success in transmitting his message depended on his ability to inspire devotion from his diverse audiences which in turn facilitated their assimilation of his teachings. Ranulphe came to Paris in the middle of the thirteenth century to complete his studies at the faculty of arts, then at the faculty of theology at the University of Paris. He pursued his career in the French capital as a parish priest of St. Gervais (1267-1272), as canon at Notre-Dame Cathedral (1272-1280), and finally as bishop from 1280-1288. At the same time, he had acquired his religious ranks at the faculty of theology, named *magister* in 1272 and received a chair at the university. His career suggests that he preached often, however Bériou’s analysis

²¹ “Praedicatio est publica instructio morum et fidei, informationi hominum deserviens, ex rationum semita, et auctoritatum fonte proveniens”; Allain of Lille, *Summa de Arte Praedicatoria*, in Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina, Patrologiae cursus completus* (Harvard University: 1855), vol. 210, p. 111.

is centred on the twenty-one sermons that remain from him.²² To convince, d'Houblonnière depended on the argument of authority: “*you must believe what I say*”, because “*this authority*” guarantees its veracity or necessity.²³ There were three types of ‘authorities’ to which Ranulphe made explicit references and were announced by formulas such as *Legitur* or it is read, *sacra Scriptura docet* or sacred scriptures teaches, and *Ieronimus dicit* or St-Jerome says in his sermons. Ranulphe cites the scriptures, the lives of the saints and the works of the Church fathers: St. Augustine, St. Gregory, St. Jerome and St. Ambrose and others. He also supported his evidence with popular wisdom and everyday common sense when he used the formula *Ut dicitur et verum est* or as it is true to say. Some of the methods of explanation prescribed in preaching manuals were not employed by Ranulphe. He rarely applied rational explanations in the form of syllogisms, where two or three premises would be presented which then led the audience to a rational conclusion. He provided reasons for his statements, but he mostly relied on interpretations of the scriptures and analogies.²⁴ The interpretation of scripture was a scholarly method acquired through university training and was also based in a learned Church culture. Bériou notes that “as a good theologian” Ranulphe consistently used scriptural commentary in his sermons with an affinity for figurative or tropological

²² The thirteen sermons of Ranulphe de la Houblonnière are found in the manuscripts *Paris BNF Lat. 16481* and *Paris BNF Lat. 16482*.

²³ Nicole Bériou, “L’art de convaincre dans la prédication de Ranulphe d’Homblières” in *Faire croire: Modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XIIe au XVIe siècle* (Table ronde organisée par l’École française de Rome, en collaboration avec l’Institut d’histoire médiévale de l’Université de Padoue: Rome, 1981), pp. 39-65.

²⁴ Bériou, “L’art de convaincre”, p. 54. Theoretical preaching manuals provided preachers with many methods of explanation to convey the preacher’s message to the audience. Ranulphe de la Houblonnière’s example shows that preachers had their own preferred methods of explaining their message and did not always rely on all available or prescribed methodologies of preaching. See Siegfried Wenzel, *Medieval 'Artes Praedicandi': A Synthesis of Scholastic Sermon Structure* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Thomas M. Charland, *Artes praedicandi, contribution à l’histoire de la rhétorique au Moyen Age* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1936).

meanings, and to a lesser degree, allegorical meanings. Ranulphe fashioned a whole system of analogies to make himself understood based in a continuous 'game' of comparisons. He established analogies between the body and the soul: sin was compared to a wound or venom, while confession was compared to a 'bleeding' or 'house cleaning'. Animals allowed Ranulphe to invoke the devil who gained access to the sinner as a fox at the burrow of the groundhog. But the devil could be chased away by preaching as the wolf is chased away by shouting. The devil could be chased away by true contrition through warm tears as is the dog chased away from the kitchen with hot water.²⁵ These comparisons were easily relatable for Ranulphe's audience and through them conveyed the religious message. However, the preacher relied on his theological training based in learned culture in order to articulate the religious meaning his comparisons were meant to convey. Nevertheless, the comparative everyday experiences of the body and of nature he related in his sermons constituted for both the preacher and his audience the foundation of a mutual culture through which religious teachings could be transmitted and absorbed. The authority of the preacher thus derived from his designated role as an interpreter of the Word of God. References to the Gospels, other biblical texts and other known biblical authorities, such as the Church Fathers, confirmed the veracity of the sermon for the audience.²⁶

Sermon composition became more sophisticated with the increase in public preaching during the twelfth century. Preaching handbooks explained the scholastic approach to scriptural interpretation that outlined the choices of themes. *Forma*

²⁵ Bériou, "L'art de convaincre", p. 55.

²⁶ Silvia Serventi, "La parole des prédicateurs: Indices d'oralité dans les *reportationes* dominicaines (XIV^e-XV^e siècles)", *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*, no. 20 (2010), p. 289.

praedicandi outlined the conventions in the choice of themes used to divide a sermon. In combination with the thematic interpretation of scripture came the necessity to deliver an effective religious message. Rhetoric was an integral part of university training of doctors of theology. Along with grammar and logic/dialectics, rhetoric, or the art of persuasion, was one of the core trivium subjects of the seven liberal arts taught at universities. Rhetorical theories applied to the increasingly complex composition of sermons helped to create the late medieval approach to scholastic preaching called *ars praedicandi*. Thomas M. Charland has emphasized how the emergence of *ars praedicandi* was closely tied to the scholastic method taught in universities. Medieval schools and universities taught sermon composition, the study of scripture and required students to practice preaching.²⁷ In the thirteenth century, the University of Paris formalized the overlap of these studies in which theology students had to preach at least once a year and preaching evaluations were a prerequisite to the granting of the licence. Other universities followed Paris' example. While Charland has shown clear ties between the development of the thematic sermon and universities, which is often called the 'university style sermon', Phyllis Roberts has pointed out how that the basic elements of rhetorical preaching were available and used outside the universities.²⁸ By the thirteenth century, universities were teaching analytical approaches to sermon composition and delivery and preaching manuals known as *artes praedicandi* began to be produced in order to provide instruction and guidance in the application of the techniques developed during this period.²⁹

²⁷ Charland, *Artes praedicandi*, p. 110.

²⁸ Phyllis Roberts, "The *Ars Praedicandi* and the Medieval Sermon" in Carolyn Muessig (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 47.

²⁹ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, p. 175.

An early example of a preaching manual is Guibert de Nogent's introduction to his *Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat* (c.1080), a work commenting on Genesis. Guibert discussed in general terms the organization and delivery of sermons. Guibert's treatise on preaching is divided into three parts prescribing who should preach, how and what to preach and concludes with a description of the impact preaching has on its audience. Guibert distinguished between those who preach for God and those who preach from selfish motives. However, a preacher's personal motives do not preclude the benefit of preaching that is provided to the audience. Those who can preach, therefore, ought to preach.³⁰ Guibert recommended that sermons be composed with a diverse audience in mind. Preachers should draw from sources other than scripture to make the religious message more relatable to the illiterate, but innovative enough to keep the interest of those who have read scripture. Guibert emphasized the importance of attending sermons. Reforming sinners was the goal of preaching. Guibert thought that fire and brimstone style sermons that describe eternal punishment for sinful behaviour were unlikely to move and change the audience. Instead, preachers should give examples of the real-life benefits for moral behaviour and layout the consequences of grief and suffering for sinful behaviour.³¹

As mentioned above, the Cistercian Alan of Lille was very influential in the later development of *ars praedicandi* in the thirteenth century. His *Summa de arte praedicatoria* (c.1199) discussed in detail the use of authorities and the subject matter relevant for different audiences. Alan was mainly concerned that the subject and content

³⁰ Wanda Zemler-Cizewiski, "Guibert of Nogent's *How to Preach a Sermon*", *Theological Studies*, no. 58 (1998), pp. 406 - 419, see p. 412.

³¹ Zelmer-Cizewiski, "Guibert of Nogent's *How to Preach a Sermon*", p. 418.

of sermons be presented to the appropriate audience. He advised preachers to be aware of the kind of audience to whom they were preaching. For Alan, different preaching situations required different kinds of subject matter to be presented. He identified various audiences as: soldiers, advocates or *oratores*, doctors, prelates, religious/clergy, those who are married, widowed, and virgins. He also included a large number of models of sermons in his treatise on preaching.³² James Murphy points out that Alan's work shows considerable knowledge of the long tradition of preaching in Christianity, which Murphy divided into three major phases in Christian preaching. The first phase begins with Christ who was the first Christian preacher and who directed his followers to spread his doctrines through preaching. Murphy calls this type of missionary preaching "preceptive" in the sense that Christ was the preaching model that gave direction to Christians who felt the need to preach his message.³³ The second phase in Christian preaching is characterized by Saint Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* (c. 426). In Book IV of this work, Augustine outlined his precepts on preaching and established a tradition in rhetorical preaching that reflect Cicero's and other classical rhetorical theories. Augustine formulated a rhetorical theory of preaching so that God's message could be effectively transmitted and absorbed. Rhetorical speech provokes the listener, grabs their attention and allows information to be transmitted. Augustine identified this as a two-way process. The act of listening is not static. The listener's mind is discerning information as they hear it. Beyond the eloquence of speech, Augustine emphasized the relatability of the speaker as well as the message. In relating

³² Roberts, "The *Ars Praedicandi* and the Medieval Sermon", p. 46.

³³ James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 277.

to the message, listeners are not merely learning the content of doctrines but are internalizing them. An effective preacher applying rhetoric in his sermons will prompt members of his audience to be themselves moved and apply God's message to their daily and spiritual lives. Augustine anchored his rhetoric in scripture and the Fathers of the Church. "For Augustine (...) understanding scripture requires the tools of both grammar and rhetoric while transmitting knowledge to others requires a rhetoric based on love as well as evocative skills".³⁴ This rhetorical phase of Christian preaching included Gregory the Great's influential *Regula pastoralis* (c. 590) that emphasizes the importance of preaching by bishops as well as the content of sermons. Guibert and Alan's works in the eleventh and twelfth centuries helped to establish the third phase of *ars praedicandi* in the thirteenth century, building on the traditional missionary and rhetorical elements of preaching.

In the thirteenth century, *ars praedicandi* integrated the missionary and the rhetorical aspects of preaching into more complex compositions of sermons. Emphasis had gradually shifted from monastic sermons preached to other clerics in the early Middle Ages to compositions adapted for popular audiences in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The growth of popular preaching reflected the increase in population and the development of towns and universities. Pope Innocent III, himself a prolific preacher, promoted the use of sermons during periods of inquisitions against heretics and crusades in the Holy Land. Innocent III presided over the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) which promoted preaching in its tenth canon by requiring bishops to name suitable preachers. Mendicant preachers helped to battle against heresy and spread Christian ideals.

³⁴ Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, pp. 291-292.

Transformations in society and religion paralleled developments in sermon composition. The new approach to the rhetoric of preaching, *ars praedicandi*, represents what Murphy calls a “homiletic revolution”.³⁵

The production of *ars praedicandi* manuals devoted to the instruction of techniques in composing and delivering sermons after 1200, reflected the prevalence as well as the sophistication of popular preaching. More than 300 manuals of *ars praedicandi* have been identified that were produced between the thirteenth century and the early fifteenth century.³⁶ These manuals varied in scope and focus, from emphasizing the moral conduct of preachers to more technical aspects of sermon composition. Robert of Basevorn’s *Forma praedicandi* (1322) was a comprehensive manual on the art of preaching. This work discussed sermon composition in form and content, the choosing and division of themes and subthemes and the use of authorities to validate the doctrines that are presented. Robert echoed Alan of Lille on the importance of public sermons: “Preachers by ordinary institution are held to preach by necessity of salvation (...).” Robert combined the traditional elements of rhetorical and missionary aspects of Christian preaching to fully articulate the late medieval style of thematic sermons – *ars praedicandi*: “Preaching is the persuasion of the multitude, within moderate length of time, to worthy conduct.” Preaching is distinguished from other forms of speech because the aim of other forms speech is not “eternal life”. Philosophical lectures exploring questions of truth or political speeches seeking to “aid the state” may exploit moral arguments to persuade, but those speeches have a different

³⁵ Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 310.

³⁶ Roberts, “The *Ars Praedicandi* and the Medieval Sermon”, p. 46. See also Marianne G. Briscoe *Artes Praedicandi: Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental* 61 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992).

intent than preaching. The use of rhetoric as a form of persuasion is for the salvation of the audience: “The preacher, as far as he can do so according to God, ought to attract the mind of the listeners in such a way as to render them willing to hear and retain [the sermon].”³⁷ Robert’s *Forma praedicandi* was one of the preaching manuals that can serve as a prime example of the articulation of *ars praedicandi*, the style of preaching that endured until the revival of Cicero’s theories on rhetoric during the Renaissance.³⁸

The complex structure of late medieval sermons reflects the university training ordained preachers received in the liberal arts. Preaching manuals reflect the influence of the disciplines taught in universities such as grammar, logic, rhetoric and theology. Scholastic sermons distinguish themselves as interpretations in the meaning of scripture formulated for a popular audience. By applying the scholastic method, late medieval preachers became specialists in scriptural interpretation and its articulation into a religious message destined for a popular audience. A text from scripture, the foundation of a sermon, was the *thema*, and it was through the *thema* that doctrinal substance of the sermon was confirmed because it came directly from scripture. The oratory structure of the sermon was performed within this framework and was supported by the biblical text. The preacher’s work consisted in drawing out from the *thema* an emotional response from the audience, to demonstrate that on the whole, the lesson being taught was pulled from the scriptural text in question. After announcing the *thema*, the preacher then developed the *prothema*, another biblical text. The second text would often present apparent contradictions or difficulties of fusion with the first text. The art of preaching

³⁷ Robert of Basevorn, *Forma praedicandi*, in Thomas M. Charland, *Artes praedicandi: contribution à l’histoire de la rhétorique au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Vrin, 1936), pp. 233-323.

³⁸ Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 344.

often resided in the ability to find a second text whose connections in sense and form with the first text initially seemed unclear. In the late Middle Ages, this feature originated from university training, such as academic disputations and dialectics, which often gave sermons the feature of proving an argument.³⁹

Depending on the audience, sermons can be divided into two categories: *extra* for the people and *intra* for other clerics. If we concentrate on the category *extra*, it simply signified that the preacher found his starting point outside the scriptural text, the *thema*, to achieve three unspoken purposes. First, the preacher strove to find a way to reinforce his argument by discussing contrary or opposite circumstances. For instance, the preacher would demonstrate the merit of continence as opposed to malice and luxury.⁴⁰ Second, the preacher found a way to induce the audience members to deduce for themselves the correct judgement of the hypothetical case. By proceeding in this way, particular attention was thus paid to the implicit judgement of the people and their reasoning process. The audience members reinforced their own convictions by making the judgement individually: “should not a man be mad to make with his own hands the noose which allowed his enemies to capture him?”⁴¹ Third, the preacher would now have to give concrete examples to the audience: “which is worth a lot for the laity, who represent external rejoicing; *quod multum valet laicis, qui similitudinibus gaudent externis*”.⁴² The *exemplum* was the last and ultimate instrument the preacher used to

³⁹ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: The Medieval Church* (Cambridge: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), p. 299.

⁴⁰ E. Gilson, *Les idées et les lettres* (Paris: Vrin, 1932), p. 131.

⁴¹ Gilson, *Les idées et les lettres*, “ne faudrait-il pas qu’un homme fût fou pour former de ses propres mains un nœud qui permît à ses ennemis de le pendre?”, p. 131.

⁴² Gilson cites *Ars concionandi* ch. 3, p. 39 that was attributed erroneously to St. Bonaventure (1217-1274). *Ars concionandi* is a preaching manual that was included in the compilation work of St. Bonaventure, *Opera Omnia* published between 1588 and 1594. *Les idées et les lettres*, p. 131.

convince his audience. *Exempla* were usually presented as narratives based on events presented as true or historical. These narratives conveyed a moral and religious message. For example, the dangers of eternal damnation are made clear as a consequence of not confessing sins to a priest in this story of a widow who was in danger of eternal damnation. For her acts of charity, she had gained a good reputation in the community. However, before she died her courage had failed her and she had not confessed the carnal relations that she had maintained with her manservants.

And when she died, the bishop of the city, for her good reputation buried her inside the church honorably. But when a servant the next day opened the church containing the tomb of this woman it was now full of great smoke, and he ran to announce this to the bishop. And the bishop now armed himself with his religious garment (estole) and came with his clerics to the church and saw in the grave a blackened woman and the demons dancing around her and by holy water he chased them away. And the woman was asked to say why she was there in this fashion. And the woman responded: Alas! Alas! I am she who many called a prudent woman, thus I am condemned for my luxurious will that I dared not confess for shame.⁴³

It was common to see the *exemplum* exploited to incite fear. However, we should not lose sight of the spirit of appeasement in the narrative and in religious discourse in general, which counterbalanced the weight of terrifying declarations. Through the *exemplum*'s story, pernicious and sinful behaviours were condemned by the worst divine punishments; however the moral guidance of the preacher provided the solutions to

⁴³ "Et quand morte fust, l'evesque de la cite, pour sa bonne renommée l'ensevelit dedans l'eglise honorablement. Mais li marlie (*bedeau*) quand lendemain ouvri l'eglise tantost veist de la fosse d'icelle femme issir une grande fumiere (*fumée*) et courut ce nonchier (annoncer) à l'evesque. Et li evesque tantost s'arma de l'estole et vient avec ses clers à l'eglise et vey sour la fosse une noire femme seoir et les deables entour elle lesquels par l'eawe (eau) benoitte les encacha (enchaça, chassa). Et la femme quera qu'elle desist qui elle estoit et pour quoy lça se seoit. Elle répondit : Helas! helas! je suys celle qui tant preudefemme suyrenommée, ains je suys condampnée pour ma volonté luxueuse que je n'osai pour honte confesser." Cambrai, ms. 210, l, f^o87 v., col 2. Cited in H. Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur*, p. 500.

avoid this outcome. There is no doubt that these tales frightened ordinary people, because preachers multiplied and continually used them.⁴⁴

Exempla have been extensively researched from literary and historical perspectives. *Exempla* and preaching are interwoven in religious literature. Jean Welter's study published in 1927 examines the development of *exempla* as a genre throughout the Middle Ages. Frederic Tubach's *Index exemplorum* published in 1969 remains a highly valuable catalogue of religious tales recounted in the Middle Ages, especially by preachers. *L'exemplum* published cooperatively in 1982 by Claude Bremond, Jacques Le Goff and Jean Claude Schmitt examines medieval *exemplum* literature, the structure of the *exemplum* in Jacques de Vitry's chronicles and the role of the *exemplum* in sermons.⁴⁵

The devil was a common figure that appeared in narratives presented by preachers in their *exempla*. Hervé Martin's linguistic analysis of late medieval preaching shows that the devil appears much more frequently in *exempla* than in any other parts of sermons: "Nowhere else more than in *exempla* is the devil given free rein to unleash his ruses and his torments".⁴⁶ The number of *exempla* used in sermons varied between preachers and between sermons. Some sermons were devoid of *exempla*, while others presented several religious narratives in sequence one after the other.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ J. Le Goff, *La naissance du purgatoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981) pp. 80-81

⁴⁵ Jean Thébaut Welter, *L'exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du Moyen Âge* (Genève: Slakine, 1973, reprint (1927); Frederic C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1969); Claude Bremond, Jacques Le Goff, and Jean-Claude Schmitt (eds.), *L'"exemplum": Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental*, 40 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982).

⁴⁶ Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur*, p. 318

⁴⁷ Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur*, p. 488.

The widespread use of religious tales in which demons and spirits of the dead take a prominent role is confirmed by Stephen Gordon's work *Supernatural Encounters: Demons and the Restless Dead in Medieval England*.⁴⁸ Gordon examined the use of spirits as literary devices and textual symbols in a range of English sources dating between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Gordon's work focused on how spirits were used as rhetorical tropes in literary, historical and religious narratives. For example, the story of the 'Witch of Berkeley' in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regnum Anglorum* (1125) is analyzed as symbolic commentary on politics. As she had instructed before her death, the witch was buried in a leaden coffin bound with three iron chains. Despite the measures to secure her body, a demon was able to break the last chain on the third night after her burial. He dragged out her body and rode off with it on a terrifying black horse outfitted iron spikes. On the surface, the story of the Witch of Berkeley served as a moral *exemplum* against the use of magic and witchcraft, depicting how witches were dragged away from hallowed ground by demons. However, Gordon argues that Malmesbury's story reflected his wish to get rid of the Norman aristocracy from English lands during the 1050s. In the same way that a practitioner of dark magic was removed from sacred grounds, Malmesbury wished for the political purge and removal of the Norman intruders from England.⁴⁹

In his analysis of John Mirk's sermons and a series of twelve revenant stories transcribed by an anonymous monk in the fifteenth century, Gordon shows that belief and interest in revenant corpses persisted well into the late Middle Ages. Rather than

⁴⁸ Stephen Gordon, *Supernatural Encounters: Demons and the Restless Dead in Medieval England* (London: Routledge, 2020).

⁴⁹ Gordon, *Supernatural Encounters*, pp. 28-76.

disembodied ghosts, Mirk's sermons presented those who return from the dead as animated corpses. He used *exempla* describing revenants that could be guided by spirits and demons to warn his congregation that sin had horrifying consequences in both the mortal and the spiritual worlds.⁵⁰

Exempla find their root in classical works. Ancient legends and tales were frequently referenced and cited by ancient writers such as Quintilian who devoted a full chapter on *exempla* in his *Institutio oratoria* (c. 92 AD).⁵¹ The early Church quickly adapted ancient legends to its needs. Christianized versions of Greek and Roman sources were put to use for conversion and instruction. The late sixth-century Pope Gregory the Great's dialogues were one of the early collections of *exempla* used by preachers, so much so that Gregory was titled the "Father of the *Exemplum*" in Europe.⁵² His and others' *exempla* were utilized throughout the Middle Ages with an emphasis on biblical and hagiographical stories.⁵³ In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, collections of *exempla* became their own form of literature. Of the forty-six collections of *exempla* cited by Welter, thirty-four date between 1250-1350, most of them by Dominicans and Franciscans.⁵⁴

Exempla concerning the devil were extremely common. The devil was almost always invoked when preachers condemned sinful behaviours. The threat of divine chastisement through demonic punishment for sinful behaviours was a rhetorical method preachers used often. In contrast, stories involving magic and the demonic pact were not

⁵⁰ Gordon, *Supernatural Encounters*, p. 148.

⁵¹ Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 22-26.

⁵² M.D. Howie, *Studies in the use of Exempla* (London: University of London Press, 1923), p. 6.

⁵³ Welter, *L'exemplum*, p. 50.

⁵⁴ Bremond, *L'Exemplum*, pp. 58-60.

frequently mentioned in sermons destined for a popular audience. However, in contexts where the clergy were working to eliminate heresy, magical and other non-Christian behaviours and beliefs, preachers delivered sermons condemning heretics by deliberately associating them with the devil and/or the Antichrist.

Exempla that mention the demonic pact occur infrequently throughout the late Middle Ages. The head monk of the Abby of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, makes references to the devil throughout his collection of *exempla*, *De Miraculis* (1150). Demonic agency is omnipresent throughout this work. However, the demonic pact is only mentioned in one *exemplum* and is described as an “implicit” pact.⁵⁵ In the thirteenth century, the Augustinian bishop Jacques of Vitry, renowned for his prolific sermons against the Cathars during the Albigensian Crusade, left around 400 sermons dated 1226 to 1229. Vitry’s edited collection of *exempla* makes many references to the devil as a source of temptation and as an agent of deception who works to destroy Christian faith.⁵⁶ Vitry’s hagiography of the Beguine mystic Marie of Oignies describes how she became afflicted by the devil and became unable to participate in the sacraments of the Church. Deceptive thoughts induced by the devil left this poor woman unable to practice confession or communion. Vitry explains that prayer was able to deliver her from the devil’s torments.⁵⁷ Caesarius of Heisterbach’s collection of *exempla*, *Dialogus miraculorum* (c. 1219), depicted the character of the devil throughout

⁵⁵ Jean-Pierre Torrell et Denis Bouthillier, *Pierre le Vénérable et sa vision du monde. Sa vie, son œuvre, l’homme et le démon* (Louvain: Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense, 1986), pp. 237-238.

⁵⁶ Thomas F. Crane, *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry* (London: Folk-Lore Society, 1890); Jean-Claude Schmitt, “Du bon usage du ‘credo’”, in *Faire croire: Modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XIIe au XVe siècle*, Actes de table ronde de Rome (22-23 juin 1979) (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1981), pp. 337-361, see p. 356 .

⁵⁷ Margot H. King and Hugh Feiss (eds.), *Two Lives of Marie d’Oignies, by Jacques de Vitry and Thomas Cantimpré* (Toronto: Peregrina, 1998).

this work as a source of temptation to sin, religious corruption and divine punishment. This work is a compilation of stories of miracles and contains many tales that describe how unsuspecting individuals were tricked and seduced by the devil into sinful behaviour, only to be violently killed, dragged away by demons and tormented in the afterlife. Some individuals were able to be saved before or after death through the sacraments, while others were condemned to suffer. These narratives vividly described how any transaction with the devil, even if the person was tricked into it by lack of faith, would lead to suffering and torment.⁵⁸ The Dominican Stephen of Bourbon's magisterial collection of *exempla*, *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus* (c. 1262), helped to expand and amplify the use of religious narratives by preachers.⁵⁹ This work of *exempla* was compiled in the same period when *ars praedicandi* established the thematic sermon as the most effective style of preaching. Again, the figure of the devil maintains an extensive presence throughout this compilation of religious tales. Stephen was a Dominican inquisitor and preacher. The central argument that runs through Stephen's collection of *exempla* is the spiritual benefits procured by the sacrament of confession.⁶⁰ The twenty-first canon of the Fourth Lateran Council *Omnis utriusque sexu* promulgated in 1215 mandated that Christians practice confession at least once a year. Many of Stephen's *exempla* are intended to convince the audience that confession will free them

⁵⁸ Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, Joseph Strange (ed.) (Cologne: H. Lempertz & Comp, 1851).

⁵⁹ Stephani de Borbone [Étienne de Bourbon], *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus, Prologus, Prima Pars. De Dono timoris*, Jacques Berlioz et Jean-Luc Eichenlaub (eds.) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002); A. Lecoy de la Marche, *Anecdotes historiques, légendes et apologues tirés du recueil inédit d'Étienne de Bourbon* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1890).

⁶⁰ Jacques Berlioz, "Quand dire c'est faire dire: Exempla et confession chez Etienne de Bourbon", in *Faire croire: Modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XIIe au XVe siècle*, Actes de table ronde de Rome (22-23 juin 1979) (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1981), pp. 299-335, see p. 302.

from demonic torments. An eschatological perspective sustains Stephen's religious narratives. These *exempla* frame confession as not only a way to please God and to secure salvation but also as a means to combat the devil. The fourth book, devoted to penitence and contrition, describes how confession frees a contrite person from the oppression of the devil, of his chains, of his jaws and of his deceptions. Confession also liberates the soul from the death of the body, from the fire and from the perils of the sea.

The extensive use of *exempla* framed by the religious rhetoric of *ars praedicandi* shows that preachers distilled sophisticated theological notions and biblical exegesis into narratives that illustrated the concrete benefits of adopting the moral behaviours and beliefs of Christianity. The figure of the devil was consciously exploited in order to frighten the audience and to make them realize that religious deviation was a demonic ruse. These narratives insisted on the sacraments, such as confession and communion, as a way to guide the audience towards salvation. *Exempla* were often structured to portray the sacraments as a defense against demonic corruption.

1.3 – Religious Discourse and Fear of the Devil

Fear became an effective rhetorical tool for preachers to convince their audience of the dangers posed by those who were designated as social and religious deviants. Hervé Martin's analysis of 800 sermons, which represents approximately what the average person would have had the chance to hear during their life, clearly shows that between the periods of the Black Death and the Reformation (1346-1517) religious discourse targeted a certain number of adversaries with tireless consistency. It sought to stimulate a strong sense of belonging to the Church by designating clear and visible enemies which were actively assaulting it: the devil and his loyal followers. The sermon

also required from the faithful that they accomplish 'Church services'. It assigned them a relatively strict code of conduct that could range from simply respecting basic Church morals to the mutual supervision of social and religious behaviours.⁶¹ The worst among perceived religious deviants would be denounced by their peers as transgressors of Christian norms or become targets of zealous inquisitors who sought to dislocate polluting heretics and 'demonized' practitioners of magic who represented a threat to the religious integrity of Christian communities precisely because they symbolized a demonic element. This threat and the connexion between religious deviance and the devil were explained to lay people through religious sermons. In the fifteenth century, a confluence of religious and social crises gave credibility to the notion of an underground sect of devil worshippers.

Prior to the fifteenth century, these notions had been applied to religious heretics with varying degrees of consistency throughout the Middle Ages. For example, the inquisitor Conrad of Marburg had invented a sect of devil worshippers in 1231 called the Luciferians based on his investigation of Cathar and Waldensian heretics.⁶² Chapter 2 will also examine how in the fourteenth century, members of the clergy who were political opponents of Pope John XXII were accused of practicing ceremonial magical rituals involving devil worship. Philip IV of France accused Pope Boniface VIII of heresy and of devil worship when the pope attempted to assert his authority over the French clergy and claim its revenues. Philip IV famously accused the Knights Templar of practicing satanic rituals in order to disband their order and confiscate all their wealth

⁶¹ Martin, *Le métier du prédicateur*, p. 619.

⁶² Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 25-26.

and property. The fourteenth century was also a time when French Jews and lepers were accused of conspiratorial criminal activities targeting French Catholics.⁶³ By the middle of the fifteenth century, for the clergy, these notions – devil worship, heresy, harmful magic – had begun to merge together. These beliefs were being put into action and transmitted to all the faithful through trials against sorcery and sermons.⁶⁴ Within the religious instruction of the masses, certain members of the clergy made an effort to excite the hostility of the people against certain groups that these clergymen associated with the devil. The condemnation of magical practices, the inquisitorial repression of heretics and the use of the devil as rhetorical tool by preachers had already been in practice long before the fifteenth century. In the trials involving devil worship in the 1420s Alps and in the demonological literature of the 1430s, the new element of the ‘sabbath’ combined all these notions together, reinforcing the belief that there existed an underground sect of devil worshippers.

The progressive construction of the image of the demon worshipping practitioner of magic was mainly derived through the persecution of ‘real’ heretics, religious groups who operated in secret out of the very real threat of judicial and military repression. The persecution of the Cathars and Waldensians in the thirteenth century, the Beguines in the fourteenth century, the Waldensians again throughout the fourteenth century and in the fifteenth century and the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century, combined with economic and environmental crises in Europe during this period, all gave the impression that the

⁶³ Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear from Ancient times to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 162-163.

⁶⁴ Michael D Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 134.

Catholic population was being assaulted by heretical demonic agents.⁶⁵ The ancient idea of the demonic pact had been made popular by the thirteenth century through successive versions of the legend of Theophilus, probably of Byzantine origins.⁶⁶ The legend was written in Greek for the first time in the sixth century by the writer Eutyhianius. A Latin version from the eleventh century is attributed to Paul Diaconus. The legend was revived many times between the 1000 and 1350 in France, Germany, Italy and the Low Countries. Around the year 1000, the head nun of the abbey of Gandersheim in Saxony, named Hroswitha, rewrote the story after first having written an original tale in which a young slave had asked the devil for help in order to procure him the love of his mistress. There are three known versions of Theophilus written in France, and three more versions in Germany, all in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and one from the Netherlands in the fifteenth century. Each version was adapted to the concerns of its period and region.

The fifteenth century version from the Netherlands recounts the adventures of Theophilus, a monk of a Sicilian church, who died around 538. Theophilus felt vexed when he had not obtained from his superiors the advancement that he believed had been promised to him. He was put in contact with the devil through a sort of Judeo-Turkish man named Saladin, like the sultan. The devil agreed to help him become more powerful with the stipulation of a signed pact, to which Theophilus agreed. Very soon after their agreement was made, Theophilus obtained all the successes he desired. However, he became wrought with guilt. He then called on the Virgin Mary for help and she was able

⁶⁵ Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft*, pp. 22-27.

⁶⁶ Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 197; Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 34.

to take back the cursed pact. In all the versions, Theophilus was able to be saved by the end.⁶⁷

A literary analysis of the successive versions of the story over time shows an interesting evolution in the character of the devil. In the early medieval versions of the story, the devil appears as more of a servant, in a minor role, someone who gets paid for a service. However, by the eleventh century, Theophilus had to verbally renounce God and the Virgin to formalize the demonic pact.⁶⁸ In 1250, the French poet Ruteboeuf wrote that Theophilus hated God, that he had been injured by God and that Theophilus would injure God in return.⁶⁹ In the German fragments of the story, Theophilus must repeat after the devil that he renounces God and the Virgin and that he would become the ‘possession’ of the devil ‘in body and in spirit’.⁷⁰ The versions of this story over time help to trace the evolution of the conception of the devil through the Middle Ages. In the early medieval period, the conception of devil was frightful, often called “the prince of this world”, a source of temptation and trickery. While tales of interactions with the devil and demons were common in the early Middle Ages, the devil, spirits and demons were typically invoked and commanded to perform certain tasks and services (*in modo imperii*, or, to be governed), which did not necessarily involve devil worship: “The person engaging in invocation does not view the devil as worthy of veneration, but merely uses him as a necessary agent for some end”.⁷¹ By the late Middle Ages, it was

⁶⁷ For all the versions of the Legend of Theophilus, see Moshe Lazar, *Le Diable et la Vierge: textes dramatiques du Moyen Age* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1990).

⁶⁸ Hroswitha, *Lapsus et converio Theophili vicedomni*, v.112-120.

⁶⁹ Ruteboeuf, *Le miracle de Théophile*, v. 257-276.

⁷⁰ Translated German fragments of the *Legend of Theophile*, in Lazar, *Le Diable et la Vierge*, p. 236.

⁷¹ Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 6.

now the devil who commanded humans as his servants. The image had changed dramatically, the devil ‘servant’ had become the imperial master⁷²: “Satan entered in force in a late period in Western culture. The disparate elements of the demonic image had existed for a long time, but it was only around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that they took a decisive place in representations and practices, all the while [they] developed a terrible and obsessive conception [of the devil] at the end of the Middle Ages”.⁷³ Necromancy, an illicit ritualistic magical ceremony that was usually performed by literate members of the clergy to invoke demons, had the effect of increasingly associating magical practices with the demonic agency and devil worship.⁷⁴

The transformation of the image of the devil into a more powerful being in the late Middle Ages, which now implied his perceived ambition to rival God by driving the anti-Christian agenda and activities of heretics and practitioners of harmful magic, is directly linked to the Church’s efforts to eradicate ‘real’ dissident heretical sects in the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) established a set of canon laws and moral requirements for the faithful in a direct attempt to counter heretical sects such as the Cathars.⁷⁵ The Cathars were alleged to teach a dualistic belief of creation perceiving the spiritual world as being created by a ‘good’ god and the material world as being created by an ‘evil’ or ‘material’ god. Mark Pegg has, however, argued that many of the religious beliefs attributed to Catharism were actually

⁷² Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, p. 172 and Guy Bechtel, *La sorcière et l’Occident* (Paris: Plon, 1997), p. 117.

⁷³ Robert Muchemled, *Une histoire du diable* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p. 18.

⁷⁴ See Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1997).

⁷⁵ See *The Disciplinary Decrees of the Ecumenical Council*, translated by H. J. Schroeder (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co. 1937), pp. 242-243.

constructed by the religious authorities and conflated with popular beliefs and practices.⁷⁶ One of the decrees of the Council was to establish a doctrine on the nature of the devil, demons and angels and thereby clarify that Cathar beliefs were heretical: “[God] created from nothing both creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal (...) The devil and the other demons were created by God naturally good, but from themselves became evil. Mankind sins on the suggestion of the devil.”⁷⁷

Incrementally, the devil’s image evolved from the ‘anti-type’ of Christ to the ‘anti-type’ of God. In his influential article “Moral Arithmetic” published in 1988, John Bossy points out that in the thirteenth century, the Church transferred its emphasis from the seven deadly sins to the ten commandments and that this new emphasis on decalogue morality was a critical factor in the devil’s perceived increase in power.⁷⁸ The first commandment “Thou shall have no other gods before me” made the crime of idolatry even more egregious. Any expression of belief or behaviour that would outwardly appear to deviate from a direct reliance on God as the “prime legislator” could potentially be viewed as “false worship”.⁷⁹ Moreover, Bossy argues that the promotion of this new moral system transformed the crime of witchcraft from *maleficium* or harmful magic into that of devil worship: “The developments which inspired the early modern witch-craze – the attribution of all occult effects, except those produced by the rituals of the Church, to a pact between the offender and the devil, and the erection of a

⁷⁶ Mark Pegg, “The Paradigm of Catharism; or, the Historians’ Illusion”, in Antonio Sennis, (ed.), *Cathars in Question* (York: York Medieval Press, 2016), pp. 21-52.

⁷⁷ Paul Christophe, *Les conciles œcuméniques: le second millénaire* (Paris: Desclée, 1988), p. 45

⁷⁸ John Bossy, “Moral arithmetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments”, in E. Leites (ed.), *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 214-234.

⁷⁹ Bossy, “Moral Arithmetic”, p. 229.

towering superstructure identifying the witch as a practitioner of devil-worship – were a lurid elaboration of this original step”.⁸⁰

The late medieval preacher and theologian Jean Gerson (1363-1429) was a promoter of this new decalogue morality. Gerson became the chancellor of the University of Paris in 1395. He wrote theological works and commentaries on the ten commandments where he marked a theological change by treating the commandments as the “rock of Christian ethics”.⁸¹ Gerson justified his views theologically by asserting that the commandments had been “revealed by God and clearly shown in the light of the true faith inside the souls of the saints and devoted persons”. Gerson’s commentaries on the commandments placed the emphasis on the first commandment, but wording it differently each time. In his work the *ABC of the simple people*, he wrote “You will not adore the idols nor many gods”; in *The Mirror of the Soul*, “You will love God with all your heart” and he wrote a verse “Only one God of all creatures / To believe, to fear and to serve / In all things night and day / Your love, force and thought will place”; and in *The Compost and Calendar for the Shepherd*, “Only one God you will adore / And love perfectly”.⁸² This new paradigm paved the way for the demonization of opponents of the Church. By the fifteenth century, the powers of the devil seemed to have increased dramatically in the lead up to the first large scale trials against practitioners of harmful magic were starting to take place in Europe.⁸³

⁸⁰ Bossy, “Moral Arithmetic”, p. 230.

⁸¹ Bossy, “Moral Arithmetic”, p. 222.

⁸² Jean Gerson, for *ABC*, see *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 7, (Paris: Desclée, 1961), p. 155; *Le miroir de l’âme* reprinted in *Manuel ou guide brefve et facile des curez* (Millanges, 1602), p. 177; For the verse in the *Miroir*, see *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 7, p. 423; *Le Grand kalendrier et compost der bergiers* reprinted in *Manuel ou guide brefve et facile des curez*, p. 35.

⁸³ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt*, p. 37.

1.4 – Historians and the Devil

It was also in the fifteenth century that both popular preachers and demonologists were directly associating the practice of magic with the devil. The second chapter of this thesis will analyse the link between preaching and the rise in the prosecution of demonic magic in the fifteenth century. We will see how the Dominican preacher Vincent Ferrer preached against both the practice of magic and the Waldensian heresy in the Alps (1403-1412), exactly where the first large scale trials against practitioners of magic took place in Europe in the fifteenth century.⁸⁴ The Franciscan preacher Bernardino of Siena preached that sorcerers worship the devil and his sermons caused a handful of woman healers to be tried for harmful magic in Italy during the 1420s.⁸⁵ In the 1430s, several writers near the Alps published demonological works promoting belief in the existence of an underground sect of devil worshippers. The Dominican theologian Johannes Nider published the *Formicarius (The Ant Hill)* in 1436 in which he argued that the practice of magic is a demonic form of heresy. In 1435, the chronicler Hans Fründ described a series of trials against sorcerers in Valais in Switzerland that occurred in 1428 and elaborated the account to portray the accused practitioners of harmful magic as being part of a vast demonic conspiracy that practiced horrific antichristian rituals under the orders of the devil. In Dauphiné, the secular judge Claude Tholosan wrote a demonology *Ut Magorum et Maleficiorum Errores (The Errors of Magicians and Sorcerers)* in 1436. Tholosan had tried and executed hundreds of people, mostly women, whom he considered members of this ‘new sect’. The French

⁸⁴ Pierret Paravy, *De la chrétienté romaine à la réforme en Dauphiné : évêques, fidèles et déviants: (vers 1340 - vers 1530)* 2 vols. (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1993), p. 803.

⁸⁵ Franco Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 74.

poet Martin Franc's *Le Champion des Dames*, written in 1440-42, further promoted the stereotype of the devil worshipping practitioner of magic by describing how they rode on the backs of demons disguised as black cats or dogs to the secret night gatherings. The French inquisitor Nicolas Jacquier wrote the *Flagellum haereticorum fascinariorum* (*A Scourge for Heretical Bewitchers*) published in 1458, in which he makes a case for the existence of a new sect of heretical and diabolical sorcerers. Jacquier devoted many chapters to refuting the sceptical arguments against their existence by showing that the canon *Episcopi* does not refer to the devil and that the *Canon* condemns pagan beliefs and not beliefs in heretical demonic sorcerers. As defined in the canon *Episcopi* from the tenth century, the night flight and nocturnal assemblies of women are imaginary; those who consider them real have been deceived by the devil. On its face, this text contradicted the fifteenth and sixteenth century discourse of thinkers who defended the reality of a satanic sect by arguing that sorcerers and witches flew to their nocturnal assemblies. According to the canon *Episcopi* of the tenth century:

It is also not to be admitted that some wicked women, perverted by the Devil, seduced by illusions and phantasms of demons, believe and profess themselves, in the hours of night, to ride upon certain beasts with Diana, the goddess of pagans, and an innumerable multitude of women, and in the silence of the dead of night to traverse great spaces of earth, and to obey her commands as of her mistress, and to be summoned to her service on certain nights.⁸⁶

In contrast to this doctrine, some early fifteenth-century demonological works incorporated the notion of the reality of night flying as part of the method used by devil-worshippers to travel to their nocturnal assemblies. Combined together, these works produced an early version of the stereotype of a demonic conspiracy that would be used

⁸⁶ Translated by H.C. Lea, *Materials Toward a History of Witchcraft* (Philadelphia, 1954), in Brian Levack, *The Witchcraft Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 34.

to link the practice of harmful magic with the existence of a conspiratorial sect of devil worshippers. According to these authors, members of this sect were mostly women who rode on the back of flying demons or broomsticks to nocturnal assemblies in order to perform antichristian rituals, such as murdering unbaptized babies, performing unholy sexual orgies with demons and renouncing God and the sacraments of the Church by pledging themselves to the devil.

The links between the persecution of heretics, trials against harmful magic and the rise of demonological works produced in the fifteenth century have been extensively analysed. Pierrette Paravy discovered the Tholosan manuscript *Ut Magorum*, then edited, translated and published it in her article “A propos de la genèse médiévale des chasses aux sorcières: le traité de Claude Tholosan, juge dauphinois (1436)” in 1979.⁸⁷ In this article, Paravy shows that it was in the trials against practitioners of harmful magic in Dauphiné that the judge Tholosan was able to expose a demonic conspiracy and extract their demonic doctrines and antichristian rituals (usually under torture) which he later formalized in his demonology in order to better educate other judges in how to detect and eliminate this hidden threat. One of the main points made in Paravy’s article is that it was in this period that the stereotype of the demonic practitioner of magic was progressively taking shape as Tholosan’s demonology was published almost fifty years before the famous *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486). Paravy has also established a connection between the passage of the Dominican preacher Vincent Ferrer in the Alps and the later ignition of trials for heresy and demonic magic in her article “Remarque

⁸⁷ Pierrette Paravy, “A propos de la genèse médiévale des chasses aux sorcières: le traité de Claude Tholosan, juge dauphinois (1436)” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome, Moyen Age, Temps modernes* vol. 91, no. 1 (1979), pp. 333-379.

sur les passages de saint Vincent Ferrer dans les vallées vaudoises”.⁸⁸ For Paravy, Ferrer’s apocalyptic sermons and his denunciation of how Waldensian heretics, magical and pre-Christian rituals were all being left unchecked in the absence of proper pastoral structures produced an environment where heresy and magical practices merged into a perceived demonic conspiracy against the Church.

Paravy’s massive two tomes monograph *De la chrétienté romaine à la réforme en Dauphiné: évêques, fidèles et deviants (vers 1340 - vers 1530)* published in 1993, analyses the long-term trends in the revitalization of ecclesiastical activity in Dauphiné after a fourteenth-century low point. She gives a positive assessment of ecclesiastical renovation, giving evidence for church building, the creation of larger numbers of clerics, and providing parishes with liturgical books. Paravy provides insight on statutes concerning devotion, iconography, hagiography and patterns of religious pilgrimage. The weight of all this evidence, not to mention that of the two volumes (1536 pages), leads her to her major conclusion regarding late medieval Catholicism in Dauphiné: the process of Christianisation had been a constant battle, often violent, against deviance, but also a perseverant effort doubly pursued on the levels of acquiring and maintaining Christian norms and by refining sensibilities propitious to a life devoted to the faith.

Paravy’s account of prosecutions against magic in fifteenth-century Dauphiné is governed by her “militant Christianisation” thesis. This outbreak of prosecution for harmful magic in the mountains of Dauphiné for the years 1424-1445 is of fundamental importance for the study of witchcraft because it was one of the first outbreaks of large-

⁸⁸ Pierrette Paravy, “Remarque sur les passages de saint Vincent Ferrer dans les vallées vaudoises”, in *Croyances religieuses et sociétés alpines: Actes du Colloque de Freissinières 15, 16 et 17 octobre 1981*, (1987), pp. 143-155.

scale trials against practitioners of harmful magic Europe. Paravy explains that the trials were the product of the campaign for religious reforms and renovations, and thus placed the repression of magic within the framework of trends she observed in Catholic religion.

The existence of heretical sects, such as the Waldensians, and popular magical practices posed a challenge to Catholic orthodoxy and produced the impression that religious deviance was the consequence of demonic attacks upon the Church. Historians have interpreted this transformation as a result of the Church's efforts to eliminate 'real' heretical underground movements. A group of historians at the University of Lausanne have analysed the emergence of the trials against sorcerers and the development of the sophisticated demonological theories in the fifteenth century. Martine Ostorero, Kathrin Utz Tremp, Georg Modestin and Catherine Chène's work in this field has produced a series of publications of edited primary source books of trial records against demonic magic and demonologies, and collections of articles and monographs analysing the emergence of occurrences of trials and demonological theories. In collaboration, Ostorero, Utz Tremp and Modestin published *Inquisition et sorcellerie en Suisse romande: Le registre Ac 29 des Archives cantonales vaudoises (1438-1528)* in 2007, an edited version of trial records against sorcerers in French speaking Switzerland in the fifteenth century.⁸⁹ This group also published an annotated collection of excerpts of demonological texts discussed above: *L'imaginaire du sabbat: édition critique des textes*

⁸⁹ *Inquisition et sorcellerie en Suisse romande. Le registre Ac 29 des Archives cantonales vaudoises (1438-1528)*, Textes réunis par Martine Ostorero et Kathrin Utz Tremp en collaboration avec Georg Modestin (Lausanne: Cahiers lausannois d'histoire médiévale, 2007).

*les plus anciens (1430 c. - 1440 c.).*⁹⁰ The demonological texts of Nider, Tholosan, Fründ, Franc, and the anonymous *Errores Gazariorum* dated c.1440, are presented in their original language accompanied by a page for page French translation. The excerpt of each text is presented with an annotated analysis of its author and historical context.

Martine Ostorero made extensive use of demonological texts in her brilliant analysis of the emergence of the concept of the sabbath: *Le diable au sabbat: Littérature démonologique et sorcellerie (1440-1460).*⁹¹ Ostorero concentrated her analysis on the works of three authors who wrote demonologies within a few decades of each other and who were connected geographically: the *Tractatus contra invocatores demonum* (1450-1452) of Jean Vinet, the *Flagellum hereticorum fascinariorum* (1458) of Nicolas Jacquier and the *Flagellum maleficorum* (1462) of Pierre Mamoris. All three were from France and were university educated. Vinet and Jacquier were Dominican inquisitors while Mamoris was a secular priest. Ostorero examines the inquisitorial work of Vinet and Jaquier to place their demonological theories in context. Vinet was an inquisitor in Paris (c. 1443) and later in Carcassonne (1450-1470) in the period when the papacy was attempting to reinforce the jurisdiction of inquisitorial tribunals through Nicolas V's bull of 1451, specifically against demonic sorcerers.⁹²

⁹⁰ Martine Ostorero, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, Kathrin Utz Tremp (eds.), *L'imaginaire du sabbat: édition critique des textes les plus anciens (1430 c. - 1440 c.)* (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 1999).

⁹¹ Martine Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat: Littérature démonologique et sorcellerie (1440-1460)* (Florence: Sismel, 2011).

⁹² Nicolas V addressed the bull (*Inquisitorem tolosanum*) dated August 1, 1451, to the inquisitor Hugues Noir, confirming and expanding his authority in the kingdom of France to pursue blasphemers, acts of sacrilege, soothsayers and crimes that will provoke God's anger. Significantly, the bull specifies that inquisitors can pursue *quarreristae* (from *chareeressa*) or sorcerers who copulate with beasts. See Thomas Ripoll, *Bullarium*, vol. 3 (Rome: Hieronymus Mainardus, 1731), p. 301 and Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p.93 and p. 738-739 (Annexe 2).

Jacquier was originally from Burgundy and educated at the University of Dijon. He became an inquisitor in 1451 in the territories surrounding Burgundy and Lyon. He authored *De calcatione demonum* in 1457 concerning his experience with demonically possessed nuns in the convent of Saint-Galmier (1452). The exorcisms of the nuns revealed that their possession by demons had been caused by sorcerers and the demons speaking through the nuns were compelled to reveal secrets concerning “the execrable sect, and also of their heresy and curses committed by their members” proving the existence of this conspiracy of practitioners of demonic magic.⁹³ His *Flagellum*, written the next year in 1458, is divided into twenty-eight chapters devoted to demonic manifestations and demonstrating that demons interact physically with humans. As mentioned above, a large part of this work is concerned with distinguishing the existence of a sect of devil-worshippers from the sceptical position that subscribed to the tradition of the canon *Episcopi*, which condemns the belief that women perform night flying to travel to the sabbath. Jacquier presents both theological and judicial arguments for the reality of a demonic sect of sorcerers. The uniformity of the confessions of the accused is pointed out by Jacquier as a critical piece of evidence. For Jacquier, the fact that almost all of the accused’s confessions were consistent with each other proved that their sect existed and that they were operating in a conspiratorial fashion.⁹⁴ Confessions usually involved causing harm to members of the community through curses, and attending the sabbath where attendees copulated with demons, renounced God and the Christian faith and reaffirmed their allegiance to the devil.

⁹³ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 7.

⁹⁴ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 150-151.

After a life of preaching and intense polemical activity, especially against the Hussite heresy, Jacquier died in 1472. Finally, Pierre Mamoris, probably from Limousin, was a professor of theology at the University of Poitiers (c.1456-1463). His teachers were more than likely master theologians involved in the trials of Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais, both accused, tried and found guilty of heresy.⁹⁵ Mamoris wrote his *Flagellum* at the request of the bishop of Saint Louis of Rochechart, in which he investigates the questions raised by the possible existence of a sect of sorcerers whose members interact physically with demons and the devil. Mamoris shows a kind of objectivity in his demonstration by using a dialectical approach. He confronts opposing arguments to the questions he raises, such as how can demons affect the bodies and souls of humans, or is the “sabbath” real or imagined (as prescribed by the canon *Episcopi*). According to Ostorero, Mamoris is the first author to use the term “sabbath” in the demonological literature. Mamoris disappears from the sources around 1463. His text is preserved in two medieval manuscripts re-edited three times before 1500.⁹⁶

Through her examination of each individual text, its ideas and religious and political context of its elaboration, Ostorero’s traces the progressive diffusion of the concept of the “sabbath” and the judicial repression that it induced. Ostorero’s study also helps to explain how the idea of the “sabbath” found fertile ground in regions confronted with heresy and the practice of magic outside of its original space of the Alps. The three works she examines are unedited, with only a few excerpts having been published in Joseph Hansen’s anthology source book on magic and witchcraft.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 170.

⁹⁶ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, pp. 177-198.

⁹⁷ J. Hansen, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung imMittelalter*, (Bonn, 1901, reprint Hildesheim, 1963 and 2003).

Ostorero's main focus is to understand the progressive elements that went into the formulation of a coherent demonology at the end of the Middle Ages. Demonology was a speculative branch of knowledge concerning the nature of the devil and demons and each successive author contributed to its construction. However, by the end of the Middle Ages, beliefs tied to the possibility of human interactions with demons remained highly controversial. In the fifteenth century, the new element of the 'sabbath' combined heretical groups, satanic rituals and the practice of harmful magic which gave credibility to the existence of a secret sect of devil worshippers.

The historical analysis of one or a few authors of demonological texts has been an effective approach in establishing chronological markers in the diffusion of the concept of satanic magic. Michael Bailey's study of Johannes Nider's *Formicarius* in *Battling Demons: Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages*, published in 2003, provides a greater historical understanding of the late medieval religious concerns over demonic threats. Bailey's analysis of Nider and of his work places the perceived threat of demonic magic within the wider context of religious crises in the late Middle Ages.⁹⁸ Bailey underlines that the early decades of the fifteenth century were an important turning point in the process of linking devil worship with popular magic. He argues that Nider's *Formicarius*, composed between 1436 and 1438, was one of the foundational texts in the evolution of the stereotype of the demonic witch: "Writing at the very beginning of the so-called witch craze in Europe, Nider is a critical source for understanding the early development of this new phenomenon".⁹⁹ Nider's text was

⁹⁸ Michael D. Bailey, *Battling Demons: Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

⁹⁹ Bailey, *Battling Demons*, p. 3.

extremely influential, surviving in twenty-five manuscript copies and receiving seven printed editions between 1470 and 1692, the period of the great witch hunts in Europe. The *Formicarius* was used as an important source of information by Heinrich Kramer to compose the famous *Malleus Maleficarum* (*The Hammer of the Witches*) published in 1486. Many sections of Nider's text were reproduced by Kramer word for word.

The fifth book of the *Formicarius* describes the power and abilities of witches and their interaction with demons: "de maleficis et eorum deceptionibus" or "sorcerers and their deception". Nider's conception of harmful magic contained many of the elements that served to form the later stereotype of the witch. Practitioners of harmful magic cursed their neighbours through the power they acquired from demons, including murder, infanticide, causing illness and the destruction of property. Nider believed in the nocturnal gatherings where devil worshippers renounced Christianity and pledged their allegiance to the devil. However, he did not subscribe to the idea that witches could fly. Night flying is only mentioned in the *Formicarius* in the section concerning delusional dreams caused by the devil.¹⁰⁰

Nider was a Dominican friar and a religious reformer. He taught theology in Vienna (1426) and served as prior of the Dominicans in Nuremberg (1427) and Basel (1429). He became a leading member of the Council of Basel (1431-1449). The Council was convened to deal with reforms of the Church concerning the authority of the papacy and negotiations with the heretical Hussites in Bohemia.¹⁰¹ Significantly, it was at the Council that Nider collected stories relating tales of the sect of demonic witches from a secular judge named Peter of Bern who had conducted trials against witches in the

¹⁰⁰ Bailey, *Battling Demons*, p. 39.

¹⁰¹ Bailey, *Battling Demons*, p. 6.

Simmental valley in Switzerland. As will be discussed in more detail below, these reports are historically significant in establishing the chronology of the first trials against practitioners of magic who were accused of being part of a sect of devil worshippers. Andreas Blauert has suggested that Nider's account of devil worshippers, nocturnal gatherings, the cannibalisation of children and other crimes involving demonic magic in Simmental in the early 1400s were not accurate and that Nider interpreted these accounts related to him through his own demonological lens.¹⁰² Bailey agrees with Blauert's assessment: "This argument is compelling, and certainly I do not think Nider perceived any difference between 'witchcraft' in the very early 1400's and that existing around 1437".¹⁰³ For Bailey, the earliest known reports of trials for demonic witchcraft were a conflated interpretation of the demonological ideas of the clergy combined with popular magical practices. For the clergy, the idea that ordinary illiterate peasants could have supernatural magical powers could only come from the devil: "The development or fusion was invariably the work of the judge or inquisitor, who blended the charge against the accused with his own fantasies or obsessions, which were themselves nourished by either theological and demonological knowledge or the reports of other cases that he or a colleague had adjudicated".¹⁰⁴ Bailey's *Battling Demons* helps to contextualize the clergy's fears of the devil outside of demonic magic. The *Formicarius* is not itself a demonology, but rather a compilation of religious moral tales and *exempla*, many that were meant to be used in sermons in order to instruct the faithful. Central to Bailey's argument is the idea that witchcraft is a phenomenon that cannot be understood

¹⁰² Andreas Blauert, *Frühe Hexenverfolgungen: Ketzer-, Zauberei- und Hexenprozesse des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg, 1989), pp. 57-59.

¹⁰³ Bailey, *Battling Demons*, p. 41

¹⁰⁴ Levack, *The Witch Hunt*, p. 49.

in isolation from the rest of fifteenth century culture. The demonic witchcraft stereotype was only a single facet of the clerical obsession with the devil. For Bailey, above all, the origins of the demonic witchcraft stereotype were linked to the clerical desires for the reform of the Church:

At the Council of Basel, Nider had stood for a time at what for churchmen of his day was the center of the world. He had met and dealt with many of the great religious figures of his time. He had heard and participated in the great debates: the reform of the church in head and members, questions about lay poverty and the status of beguards and beguines, and the struggle against heretics. And he had heard stories, filtering down from the Alpine valleys in the lands to the south of Basel, of what to the medieval mind was surely the most chilling heresy of all, the total apostasy of diabolical witches, who, in exchange for maleficent power, completely forsook Christ and worshiped Satan.¹⁰⁵

The Council of Basel has been identified by Michael Bailey and Edward Peters as the major centre of transmission of the existence of a demonic sect of witches: “Basel represents a critical nexus in the history of witchcraft and early witch hunting activities. Numerous clerics with a particular and demonstrated interest in the issue attended the council, and a number of early treatises on the subject can be connected in some way to this great ecclesiastical gathering”.¹⁰⁶ As discussed above, Nider was a prominent member of the council and gathered his stories and probably wrote his *Formicairus* there (1436-1438). The Dominican inquisitor Nicolas Jacquier also attended the Council of Basel from 1433-1440 before he wrote his *Flagellum* almost a few decades later (1458).¹⁰⁷ Two inquisitors who conducted trials against witches just before the council, the Franciscan Pontus Fougeyron and the Dominican Heinrich Kaltesien, are probably

¹⁰⁵ Bailey, *Battling Demons*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁶ Michael D. Bailey and Edward Peters, “A Sabbat of Demonologists: Basel, 1431-1440”, *The Historian*, vol. 65, no. 6 (Winter 2003), p. 1377.

¹⁰⁷ Bailey and Peters, “A Sabbat of Demonologists”, p. 1393.

connected to the anonymous treatise *Errores Gazariorum* (1437-1438). ‘Gazariorum’ is often translated from Latin to ‘of the Cathars or of the Cathar heresy’. In fact, the term *Gazariorum* does not appear to exist. This term is original to the title of this work. Ronald Hutton points out that the term ‘Cathar’ was applied to many heretical sects not related to Catharism denounced by clergymen.¹⁰⁸ There are three existing manuscripts of the *Errores Gazariorum*, with the second being an expanded and more detailed version of the witches’ sabbath, which was probably written around 1438 and inspired by inquisitorial trials against demonic practitioners of magic in nearby Lausanne.¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, Martin Franc was present at the Council of Basel around 1440 as the secretary to antipope Felix V. Franc was certainly aware of the discussions surrounding the existence of a sect of demonic practitioners of magic. He authored the poem *Le Champion des Dames* written in the form of a dialogue or debate. One section of the poem gives ‘for’ and ‘against’ positions on matters of demonic magic: the reality of idolatry, transvection or flying through the air, the sabbath, worship of the devil and weather magic that destroys crops.¹¹⁰ There clearly occurred at the Council of Basel informal discussions concerning the existence of a conspiratorial demonic threat to Christian societies. Yet, as Bailey and Peters point out: “Not once does the subject of witchcraft (only in this period beginning to emerge in the form it would take for the centuries of the major witch-hunts and becoming a serious concern for clerical authorities in Western Europe) appear to have been raised in any formal way at the

¹⁰⁸ Hutton, *The Witch*, p. 176.

¹⁰⁹ Bailey and Peters, “A Sabbat of Demonologists”, p. 1389.

¹¹⁰ Bailey and Peters, “A Sabbat of Demonologists”, p. 1391; For Martin Franc’s poem, see “Le Champion des Dames” in *L’imaginaire*, pp. 439-508.

council”.¹¹¹ The Council of Basel was primarily convened to deal with major reforms of the Church and one of the major subjects that was dealt with in a formal way was conciliarism.

Conciliarism is the ecclesiological theory that an ecumenical council is authoritatively superior to the pope based on the assumption that Christ had founded the Church as a council and not a monarchy.¹¹² This issue was immediately deliberated at the Council of Basel. After the call for the Council of Basel to be convened for the end of 1431, the sitting Pope Martin V died in March before the opening of the synod. Eugenius IV was elected as the new pope on March 3, 1431 and refused to attend the council. The council was seated on December 14, 1431 and the first proclamation issued by the synod was the superiority of the council over the pope. In response, Eugenius IV attempted to dissolve the council, but was unsuccessful and was forced to retract his order of dissolution. The pope did not attend the council and the conciliarist issue created a rift between the synod and the papacy. The council voted to depose Eugenius IV and elected Amadeus VIII, Duke of Savoy, as antipope Felix V in 1439, creating a second schism of the papacy. Felix V sided with the conciliarist movement by taking a vow to recognize the authority of Church councils.¹¹³ The conciliarist issue created a divide within the Church and this political question became a proxy for accusations of heresy and demonic corruption that were used as a means to discredit political

¹¹¹ Bailey and Peters, “A Sabbat of Demonologists”, p. 1377.

¹¹² Francis Oakley, *The Conciliarist Tradition: Constitutionalism in the Catholic Church 1300-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 228

¹¹³ Michel Decaluwe, Thomas M. Izbicki, Gerald Christianson, *A Companion to the Council of Basel* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 252-253.

opponents and justify their own position, whether siding with the supremacy of the pope or the councils.

Eugenius IV then involved himself in matters of magic and sorcery. In 1434, he wrote a letter to the inquisitor Ponce Fougeyron to make him aware of the existence of people practicing demonic magic. In 1437, he described the practices of demonic magic in a letter issued to every papal inquisitor, which included the demonic pact, the worship of the devil, night flying, the magical destruction of crops and the desecration of the Eucharist.¹¹⁴ It is not clear why the pope began instructing inquisitors in matters of demonic magic. Was he really concerned with the threat of demonic magic or was it an attempt to distract princes of the Church from the conciliarist issue in order to solidify his own authority? In 1440, Eugenius IV denounced Felix V in a letter addressed to the prelates of Basil as a fraudulent hypocrite and a worshipper of demons, who had long tolerated the existence of the Waldensian heresy and demonic sorcerers in his territory of Savoy and that he was probably in league with the devil. He referred to him as the “Antichrist” and “that first born of Satan”.¹¹⁵ Both pro-Basel conciliarists and supporters of the papacy mutually interpreted their struggle in apocalyptic terms and accused each other of being in league with the devil.

Political conflicts in these apocalyptic terms could lead to accusations of devil worship or redirect accusations towards demonic practitioners of magic. The preacher

¹¹⁴ Michael D. Bailey, “Eugenius IV, Pope (1383-1447)” in Jonathan Durrant (ed.), *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2012), p. 69

¹¹⁵ Frances Courtney Kneupper, “Conciliarist Employment of Eschatology during and after the Council of Basel (1431-1460)” in Mathieu Caesar (ed.), *Factional Struggles: Divided Elites in European Cities & Courts (1400-1750)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 68. See Session March 9-23, 1440 [Motion of the Council of Florence against the antipope Felix V] in Ernst von Brik (ed.), *Monumenta conciliorum generalium saeculi decimi quinti III* (Wien [Vienna], 1892), pp. 480-488.

Guillaume Adeline, discussed in chapter 2 below, took a position against the conciliarist movement and was subsequently accused of devil worship in 1453 because he supposedly preached that night flying and the sabbath were delusions.¹¹⁶ In 1482, Heinrich Kramer (1430-1505), the author of the most famous witch-hunting manual the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), was accused of misappropriating funds and property from the illegal sale of indulgences and was ordered to be arrested. In the meantime, the bishop of Craynensis in Albania had called for the Council of Basel to be reconvened and revive the conciliarist debate. In order to ingratiate himself with Church authorities, Kramer wrote a scathing attack against the bishop questioning his motives. The charges against Kramer were subsequently dropped. Kramer was commissioned to continue his work against conciliarists and to write a treatise on the subject. However, Kramer turned to witch hunting and wrote the *Malleus Maleficarum* instead: “It can be surmised that Kramer, recently released from his own investigation, saw in witchcraft a means to redirect attention from his problems onto a massive threat to Christendom requiring the concerted efforts of all churchmen, conciliarist and papist alike, thereby taking the wind out of the conciliarists’ sails”.¹¹⁷ The overlap of concerns over politics, heretical movements and magical practices were all viewed as a threat of demonic assaults upon the Church.

What these studies fundamentally show was that religious and political conflicts in the fifteenth century could be articulated as demonic attacks and resulting in accusations of demonic heresy or magic. The process of religious reforms and the

¹¹⁶ Ostottero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 656.

¹¹⁷ Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft*, p. 43 cites Eric Wilson’s Ph.D. dissertation, “*The Text and Context of the Malleus Maleficarum*” (Cambridge University, 1991), pp. 71-76.

refinement of official orthodoxy created the notion of the existence of conspiracy of devil worshippers by merging popular magical practices and the perceived conspiracies of ‘real’ heretical movements. In his comprehensive historiographical survey, *The Witch*, Ronald Hutton sums up Bailey’s analysis: “Michael Bailey has found the conception of the early modern witch in the conflation by clergymen of elite ceremonial magic, the common tradition of practical spells, and the general fear of malevolent magic, in a single demonic construct. This mixture was then grafted onto standard medieval caricatures of heretical sects”.¹¹⁸ Based on his extensive review of the literature on the central subject of this thesis, Hutton concludes that: “The single factor which can link them all is the preaching of friars who were co-operating in a campaign against popular heresy and usually conscious of the danger posed by magic (...)”.¹¹⁹ Inquisitors and itinerant preachers, tasked with upholding Christian norms, were directly confronted with communities that held beliefs and practices that were in contradiction with official Catholic doctrines. Some of these Dominican preachers interpreted these religious deviations as the work of the devil.

As will be seen in chapter 2, the merging of heresy and popular magic as forms of demonic corruption in the fifteenth century was applied between 1459 and 1461 in the inquisition of Arras. Frank Mercier has shown that the political and religious conflicts between the authority of the dukes of Burgundy and the religious authority of the Church were played out during the Arras trials. For Mercier, the inquisition of Arras allowed the Church to impose its religious reforms all the while undermining the

¹¹⁸ Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), p. 170.

¹¹⁹ Hutton, *The Witch*, p.174.

aspirations of “magisterial sovereignty” of the Valois dukes of Burgundy.¹²⁰ The Dominican inquisitor Pierre le Broussard used the term ‘vaudrie’ in reference to the accused sorcerers, a term that had acquired a dual meaning to designate both Waldensian heretics and practitioners of harmful magic.¹²¹ Broussard’s sermons delivered during the executions described in detail the satanic rituals that took place during the nocturnal gatherings, details related to the inquisitor in the confessions extracted during his leading interrogations of the accused and brutal torture sessions.¹²² The events of the inquisition of Arras were recorded and chronicled which facilitated the dissemination of the notion concerning the existence of an underground satanic conspiracy of devil worshippers.¹²³

The clusters of trials for diabolical magic, which occurred in parallel with the demonizing rhetoric of mendicant preachers in the fifteenth century, solidified the notion that heresy and harmful magic were inextricably linked by their common demonic origins. The creation of demonic witchcraft was born out of the battle that the clergy had waged against heretical sects during the Middle Ages. The work of inquisitors had exposed the conspiratorial networks of heretics which, in turn, gave credibility to the notion that practitioners of harmful magic were also conspiring in an organized fashion to corrupt Christian societies. In the contexts of religious and political conflicts, demonic corruption in the form of heresy and sorcery provided an explanation

¹²⁰ Franc Mercier, *La Vaudrie d’Arras: Une chasse aux sorcières à l’automne du Moyen Âge* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006), p. 394.

¹²¹ Mercier, *La Vaudrie d’Arras*, p. 225.

¹²² Jacques du Clercq, *Mémoires de J. Du Clercq*, vol. 3, Book IV, (Paris: Lacrosse, 1823), pp. 21-22.

¹²³ Andrew Colin Gow, Robert B. Desjardins, and François V. Pageau (eds. and trans.), *The Arras Witch Treatises: Johannes Tinctor’s invectives contre la secte de vauderie and the Recollectio casus, status et condicionis Valdensium ydolatrarum by the Anonymous of Arras (1460)* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

for the clergy for the existence of opposition to Church doctrines as well as a weapon of propaganda for those who would be designated as religious and social deviants. It provided a useful tool to distract members of the clergy from the divisive battles over conciliarism in order to unite them against a common enemy. In the sixteenth century, the Reformation intensified this notion even more when Protestants rejected the authority of the Catholic Church. Catholic preachers during the Reformation continued to use a demonizing rhetoric that associated the rejection of the sacraments as evidence of demonic agency. Apocalypticism linked to a demonic conspiracy of heretics was a rhetoric established in the fifteenth century that continued to be applied to fight Protestantism in the sixteenth century.

In the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation exacerbated fears of the devil and solidified the perception that Christian societies were under assault by demonic forces. Catholic sermons in Reformation France and during the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598) show that Catholic preachers portrayed Protestants as the immediate demonic threat. Cases of demonic possession and the popular massacres were some of the outcomes of the confessional conflicts. Both the Protestant and Catholic Reformations created a hardening of religious positions and made religious deviance a question of political allegiance. However, the rhetorical strategy of demonization was established before the Reformation, allowing Catholic preachers to apply it to Protestants in a way that was reminiscent of the attempts to convert Waldensians.

An imagined demonic conspiracy had begun to be elaborated in the context of confessional conflicts and the religious reforms initiated at the Council of Basel and the political conflicts it created. Chapters 2 and 3 will analyse how mediant preachers in

the fifteenth century provided a model for Catholic preachers in the sixteenth century that could be used to project the satanic paradigm on Protestant heretics. In this sense, the religious reforms introduced by Protestant reformers and the demonization of their religious views preached in Catholic sermons were historical continuations of trends established by late medieval preachers. The chronological break of the Reformation tends to obscure the historical extensions from the late Middle Ages concerning Catholic responses to confessional conflicts.

The Catholic Church's own efforts of renewal eventually led to the creation of new religious orders, such as the Jesuits and the Capuchins, and a systematic condemnation of Protestantism at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The ensuing confessional conflict between Protestants and Catholics was framed by reformers and preachers of both confessions as a battle between God and the devil. During the Reformation, French Catholic sermons consistently demonized the 'Protestant other'.¹²⁴ Protestant ideas were contradicted at the Council of Trent and in Catholic sermons throughout the period. Moreover, Protestant theological notions were said to be inspired by the devil. The Council of Trent issued three decrees that defined the devil's activities. Session 3, *Decreta de symbolo fidei* (Decree concerning the symbol of faith - February 4, 1546) cites Eph. 6:12 and takes the devil's existence for granted by declaring that one of the council's missions is to "extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one" in order to oppose all heresies. Session 5, *Decretum de peccato originali* (Decree concerning original sin - June 17, 1546) states that the devil's power over humans is the result of original sin and blames the devil for the existence of old and new heresies and

¹²⁴ Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion*, 2 vols. (vers 1525-vers 1610), Tome 1 (Paris: Seyssel, 1990), p. 93.

singles out Protestantism. Session 14, *Doctrina de sanctissimis paenitentia et extrema unctione sacramentis* (Doctrine concerning the holy sacrament of penance and extreme unction – November 25, 1551) describes how the devil’s cleverness leads humans away from the faith, implying that people who convert to Protestantism have been deceived by the devil.¹²⁵ For Catholics, the inherent connection between the devil and Protestant heresy was taken to the extreme by preachers throughout the sixteenth century. The next chapter will analyse how this strategy was first established by mendicant preachers of the fifteenth century who demonized Waldensian heretics in the Alps, a process which mutated into the prosecution of practitioners of harmful magic.

¹²⁵ Jeffery Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 50. For the decrees of Trent, see H.H. Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Charlotte: Tan Books, 2005), see p.15 for Session 3, p. 21 for Session 5 and p. 88 for Session 14.

Chapter 2 – Preaching against Heretics and the Demonization of magic in South-Eastern France in the Fifteenth Century

This chapter examines in detail the concrete steps that led to the creation of a comprehensive demonizing discourse that associated practitioners of harmful magic with the devil. Satanic magic, as it was vigorously repressed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, originated from a new perception of demonic agency in the world, directly linked to the inexhaustible battle against medieval heresies. These helped to refine the model of rebellion against God, as framed since the beginnings of Christianity. Historians have narrowed the chronology for the appearance of the satanic witch stereotype to the “mid- to late 1420s at different points widely dispersed across a broad area, stretching in an arc from north-eastern Spain to central Italy”.¹ The region in the Alps covers Savoy and Dauphiné in southeastern France, Piedmont and Lombardy in northern Italy and parts of Switzerland. The accusations of harmful magic in the Alps were not only against individuals who had simply cursed their neighbours or practiced illicit forms of magic. One of the first large scale trials against practitioners of magic involving accusations of devil worship occurred in Dauphiné in southeastern France, between 1424 and 1500.² Another early hunt against sorcerers occurred in the Valais region in the Swiss Alps from 1427 to 1436. The Valais trials were described by the

¹ Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 173-174.

² Pierrette Paravy *De la chrétienté romaine à la Réforme en Dauphiné: Évêques, fidèles et déviants (vers 1340 – vers 1530)*, 2 vols. (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1993), p. 780.

chronicler Hans Fründ of Lucerne around 1438 in which he reports the execution and burning of more than 200 individuals for satanic magic.³

The definition of witchcraft raises the question of how to define those who were accused of harmful magic and devil worship. It also begs the question of when and where did ordinary magic or simple sorcery become associated with a conspiracy of devil worshippers. When and how did practitioners of magic become witches? Historians have been examining and providing insightful answers to these questions. The fully developed conception of witchcraft in the sixteenth century involved harmful magic, perverted and profane rituals performed at the witches' sabbath and the devotion to a Satanic and conspiratorial agenda to undermine and destroy Christianity. In the fifteenth century, some of these ideas began to emerge individually and in combination. The problem of definition becomes apparent when we look at the terminology employed to refer to individuals accused of harmful magic and devil worship. In the 1430's in Lausanne, inquisitors used 'heresy' and 'heretic' to refer to those accused of harmful magic and devil worship.⁴ In Dauphiné, the secular judge Claude Tholosan distinguished "simple heretics" who commit errors on doctrine from "idolators" and "apostates" who perform curses and worship the devil.⁵ The religious and judicial authorities identified elements related to a demonic conspiracy that linked harmful magic with devil worship, but was different and more dangerous than simply

³ Kathrin Utz Tremp "Hans Fründ : *Rapport sur la chasse aux sorciers et aux sorcières menées dès 1428 dans le diocèse de Sion*" in *L'imaginaire du sabbat*, pp. 24-97.

⁴ Kathrin Utz Temp, "The Heresy of Witchcraft in Switzerland and Dauphiné (Fifteenth Century)." *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2011), pp. 1-10. See also her *Von Der Häresie Zur Hexerei: "wirkliche" Und Imaginäre Sekten Im Spätmittelalter* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2008).

⁵ Pierrette Paravy, "Claude Tholosan, *Ut magorum et maleficiorum errores*", in *L'imaginaire du sabbat, Edition critique des textes les plus anciens (1430 c. -1440 c.)* (Lausanne: Cahiers Lausannois d'histoire médiévale, 1999), pp. 389-391.

committing mistakes on religious doctrines. The witches' sabbath is another critical part of the fully articulated definition of witchcraft. In the fifteenth century, inquisitors and theologians rarely use the term 'sabbath' concerning secret nocturnal gatherings. The term 'synagogue vaudoise' was often used to refer to nocturnal gatherings of devil-worshippers in both trials and treatises discussing these phenomena. However, this terminology blurs their original meaning. These words invoke the 'Synagogue of Satan' referenced in Revelations and links it to the Waldensian heresy of the fifteenth century. Historians have examined these developments in the articulation of the concept of satanic witchcraft and provided comprehensive answers. Norman Cohn and others emphasize the role of inquisitors who transposed demonizing notions used against heretics onto practitioners of magic.⁶ Michael Bailey explains that magic and sorcery progressively became linked to demonic agency through the involvement of the clergy who transformed the definition of magic to be inherently demonic by the end of the Middle Ages.⁷ Pierrette Paravy associates the efforts of the clergy to better Christianize the people in the Alps to the development of a satanic conspiracy. She argues that the demonization of non-Christian beliefs and practices helped to create the notion of a satanic cult.⁸ The notion of a satanic conspiracy was then more broadly disseminated when the Council of Basel brought together leading members of the Church, inquisitors and theologians, who related to each other their experience fighting against devil-worshippers who perform harmful magic.⁹ Martine Ostorero has shown that the idea of

⁶ Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), pp. 99-102.

⁷ Michael D. Bailey, *From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages*, *Speculum* 76 (2001), pp. 960-990.

⁸ Paravy, *De la chrétienté* p. 791.

⁹ Michael D. Bailey and Edward Peters, "A Sabbat of Demonologists: Basel, 1431-1440", *The Historian*, vol. 65, no. 6 (Winter 2003), p. 1377.

the secret satanic gatherings was disseminated in theological treatises published in the 1450s and 1460s when the term ‘sabbath’ was coined.¹⁰ What these historical studies show was that the notion of satanic witchcraft was progressively constructed and pieced together during the fifteenth century by members of the clergy who were involved in repressing or eliminating heresy and popular magic. As Bailey has shown, the clergy increasingly associated magical practices with demonic agency and played a significant role in formulating the idea of demonic witchcraft. The different parts of the definition of satanic witchcraft were added to each other over time. The question of the definition of witchcraft at the beginning the fifteenth century must be referred to the terminology used by its detractors. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, mendicant preachers and inquisitors, who were working to reform popular beliefs and practices associated with heresy and popular magic, defined the practice of harmful magic as a form of demonic heresy.

There are two factors that help to explain why these regions became associated with devil worship. The first is that the Alps was the exact region where Waldensian heretics had been vigorously pursued by inquisitors beginning in the middle of the fourteenth century and throughout the fifteenth century.¹¹ The second is that the regions where practitioners of harmful magic were now accused of being part of a demonic conspiracy were exactly where Dominican and Franciscan friars were preaching against heresy and popular magic. This chapter argues that the preaching friars’ efforts to

¹⁰ Martine Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat, Littérature démonologique et sorcellerie (1440-1460)* (Florence: Sismel, 2011).

¹¹ Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, pp. 909-1183; Wolfgang Behringer, “Detecting the Ultimate Conspiracy, or how Waldensians became Witches” in Barry Coward and Julian Swann (eds.), *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 13-34.

demonize heretics led to the progressive creation of the ‘demonized’ practitioner of magic. As Ronald Hutton notes: “The single factor which can link them all is the preaching of friars who were co-operating in a campaign against popular heresy and unusually conscious of the danger posed by magic, as part of a resurgence in the prosecution of its practitioners which had commenced in Western Christendom in the 1370s”.¹² By analyzing case studies of preachers who gave sermons promoting the existence of demonic conspiracy in the fifteenth century, it will be possible to show that it was through their religious discourse that devil worship became the main factor justifying the prosecution of practitioners of magic as demonic heretics. The Dominican Vincent Ferrer (c. 1350-1419) preached apocalyptic sermons against Waldensian heretics and practitioners of magic in the Alps from 1399 to 1409. The Franciscan preacher Bernardino of Siena preached that practitioners of magic form pacts with the devil in 1420s Italy and provoked a handful of trials in the cities of Todi and Rome, contemporary with the Valais trials. He convinced the civil authorities to change their laws against sorcery, making it possible for these women to be prosecuted. In 1437, the Dominican Johannes Nider published the *Formicarius*, a guide of moral tales and *exempla* for preachers in which he describes practitioners of harmful magic as new demonic sect of heretics. In 1453, the preacher Guillaume Adeline was accused of being part of a satanic conspiracy after having preached that the secret gatherings of devil worshippers were a delusion. The connection between these cases of fifteenth century preachers who promoted the existence of a demonic conspiracy – or Adeline who was scapegoated and discredited by his opponents for preaching the opposite – constitutes

¹² Hutton, *The Witch*, p. 174.

the progressive construction of a demonizing discourse used to justify the belief in their existence and the efforts applied to eliminate them.

2.1 – The Creation of a Satanic Cult: from Heresy to Devil Worship

Heretical sects provided the exact demonological model to define satanic magic as the worst kind of heresy. The problem of medieval heresies had been answered with the establishment of the Dominican and Franciscan orders, both founded in the early thirteenth century.¹³ The origin of the ministry of the Dominican friars was one of its most notable features. Their ministry clearly sought to fill a specific need created from circumstances that could not be fulfilled from the pastoral structures that were currently in place. Parishes that were managed by local clergy were organized to look after the “normal” sacramental practices of the faithful, not to battle against oppositional religious groups. Heretical groups, such as the Cathars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were viewed as radical groups who rejected the practices and the lifestyle of regular ministers and who openly defied the authority of the Church.¹⁴ It was out of this type of situation that the “Order of the Preachers” was born. The Dominicans and Franciscans distinguished themselves from diocesan clergy by concentrating their work on itinerant preaching. Their education centred on the kind of ministry in which friars principally engaged and tailored university programs were put in place at the beginning of the thirteenth century to further this purpose.¹⁵ Both orders also enjoyed certain privileges and exemptions from the Holy See. They were exempt from the supervision

¹³ See William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, 2 vols. (New York: Alba, 1956-73), p. 37; Benoît Lacroix, *Saint Dominique: au cœur d'une chrétienté en crise* (Paris: Les Éditions du Fides, 2006), p. 28.

¹⁴ Gustave Welter, *Histoire des sectes chrétiennes des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Payots, 2011), p. 96.

¹⁵ Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, vol. 1, pp. 217-50.

of the episcopacy because their ministry imitated the apostles in that they transcended local boundaries. For historian John O'Malley, this aspect of the development of the Dominican and Franciscan orders is noteworthy because "it created in effect a church order (or several church orders) within the great church order, and it did this for the reality to which church order primarily looks – ministry".¹⁶

Another means to battle heresy was the establishment of the inquisitorial courts in 1229 in order to indoctrinate and christianize the people all the while repressing religious deviance and superstition. The 'imagined' concept of a demonic conspiracy had already been established against earlier heresies. The repression of the Cathar heresy in the thirteenth century produced the notion of a sect called the Luciferians. The inquisitor Conrad of Marburg (1180-1233) was commissioned in 1231 to investigate Cathar and Waldensian heretics in the Rhineland in Germany. He extracted confessions of devil worship from suspects and became convinced of the existence of a conspiracy of demonic heretics called the Luciferians. Marburg's findings convinced Pope Gregory IX of their existence. The pope issued the letter *Vox in Rama* in 1233 addressed to the archbishop of Mainz and the bishop of Hildesheim in which he describes Luciferian activities involving secret gatherings, sexual orgies and the worship of demons in the form of giant toads, tall black men and large black cats that initiates were required to kiss in an obscene fashion.¹⁷

¹⁶ John O'Malley, "Priesthood, Ministry, and Religious Life: Some Historical and Historiographical Considerations" in O'Malley's (ed.) *Religious Culture in the Sixteenth Century: Preaching, Rhetoric, Spirituality and Reform* (Brookfield: Variorum Collected Studies, 1993), p. 236.

¹⁷ Gary K. Waite, *Heresy Magic and Witchcraft*, p. 25; Michael D. Bailey, "Conrad de Marburg (c. 1180-1233)" in Richard M. Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition* (Santa Barbara: ABC Clío, 2006), p 209.

Heresy in the form of a demonic conspiracy was also projected onto the Waldensians who had taken refuge in the Alps in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Around 1170, the rich merchant of Lyon, Peter Valdo (1140-1217), renounced his wealth, began to preach from the books of the prophets and had the Bible translated in the vernacular. Valdo's preaching initially seemed in line with Church precepts and his movement (the Poor of Lyon) was patronized by the archbishop of Lyon, Guichard de Pontigny. However, Valdo was preaching without having been ordained as a priest and the content of some of his sermons was viewed with hostility by the newly elected archbishop, Jean Belles-Mains, who had succeeded Guichard. In 1179 Valdo was summoned to the Third Lateran Council and Pope Alexander III showed himself to be appreciative of Valdo's piety and spirit of charity. However, following an interrogation on specific points of theology by members of the council, Valdo and his followers were forbidden from preaching. According to historian Michel Rubellin, the pope did not forbid Valdo to preach. Rather, the pope instructed Valdo to only preach with permission from the local religious authorities. The conservative Cardinal-bishop Henri de Marcy (1136-1189) of the Cistercian Order visited Lyon in 1180 and forbade Valdo and his followers from preaching. Valdo and the Poor of Lyon were then chased out of the city.¹⁸ They were excommunicated in 1181 and their movement was officially declared to be heretical in 1215 by the Fourth Lateran Council. The disciples of Peter Valdo, known as the Waldensians (Vaudois),¹⁹ made their way to northern Italy and south-eastern France. After their ejection, the Waldensian movement rejected the

¹⁸ Michel Rubellin, *Église et société chrétienne d'Agobard à Valdès* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2003), p. 474.

¹⁹ Welter, *Histoire des sectes chrétiennes*, pp. 137-144.

authority of the Church and began preaching anticlerical views. Valdo began to teach that the Church of Rome was the “whore of Babylon”. Further expressions of Valdo’s anti-clericalism were articulated through the ideas that the pope and bishops were culpable of homicide because of the wars they instigated, that monks were *prigs* (self-righteous hypocrites), that no one in the Church was superior to others (universal priesthood through baptism) and that tithes should be refused. The Waldensian doctrine can be thus summarized: the absolute authority of the Bible and its inspiration, the doctrine of the divine Trinity, the state of sin in mankind, salvation through Jesus Christ and that faith is acted through charity. These arguments related to many popular negative perceptions concerning the clergy in the late Middle Ages and of people who often felt exploited by lords and clerics – perceived to be more inclined towards luxury than charity. It was not a coincidence that the Alps became a heavily contested religious region and one of the most important regions for the repression of demonic magic in the fifteenth century.²⁰

By the middle of the fifteenth century, late medieval trials against practitioners of magic were characterized by three things: first, they were usually small scale with only a handful of people accused at a time. Second, they were concentrated in the western Alps: western Switzerland, southeastern and northern France and northern Italy. The last major trial against demonic magic in the fifteenth century occurred in 1459-1460, Arras in Normandy where 29 people were tried for their membership to the *secte de vaudrie*.²¹ Third, they constitute the phase where the elements of demonic witchcraft

²⁰ Robert Muchembled, *Une histoire du diable : XII^e-XX^e siècle* (Seuil: Paris, 2000), p. 52.

²¹ Frank Mercier, *La Vauderie d'Arras: une chasse aux sorcières à l'automne du Moyen Âge*, (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006).

begin to merge: the practice of harmful magic began to be associated with a conspiracy of demonic heretics who worship the devil.²²

In the fourteenth century, the concept of devil worship also became a powerful weapon used to discredit political opponents. In 1303, “for purely political purposes”, King Phillip IV the Fair of France accused Pope Boniface VIII of heresy and of worshipping the devil in the form of a demon familiar.²³ In 1302, Boniface VIII had ambitiously asserted that his spiritual authority superseded secular and temporal powers under pain of excommunication, even monarchs. The political conflict between Phillip IV and the pope concerned jurisdiction over the French clergy and taxation of Church revenues. The pope excommunicated Phillip IV, but the king pre-emptively had the pope kidnapped in order to have him stand trial for heresy and devil worship. The pope was rescued before he could be brought back to France to stand trial, but died shortly after, probably from his ordeal.²⁴ Phillip IV famously made similar accusations of heresy and devil worship against the Knights Templar. Between 1307 and 1309, he opened proceedings against the Knights Templar, a rich and powerful organization that had operated with a substantial amount of political freedom. The list of charges resembled those that would be brought against satanic heretics in the fifteenth century. During their initiation, knights supposedly had to renounce Christ, perform the ‘obscene kiss’, engage in acts of homosexuality and they were accused of devil worship.²⁵ Across France, members of their order were arrested and made to confess under torture to

²² Hans Peter Broedel, “Fifteenth-century Witch Beliefs”, in Brian Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 32-49

²³ Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe*, p. 120.

²⁴ Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe, 1250-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 49.

²⁵ Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 178.

outlandish crimes involving satanic rituals. In 1312, their order was officially disbanded, and all of their property and wealth was confiscated by the crown. The Grand Master of the Knights Templar, Jacques de Moley, and other high-ranking knights were condemned and burned in 1314.

Accusations of sorcery and devil worship against political opponents became a defining feature of the Avignon Pope John XXII's reign (1316-1334). In 1317, the bishop of Cahors, Hugues Géraud, was accused of attempted murder by poison against the pope and several cardinals.²⁶ The charges against Géraud also included the performance of ceremonial magic through the use of wax images, representing the intended victims, that were pierced with needles.²⁷ A series of the pope's other political opponents – high ranking members of the clergy and secular lords – were either accused of practicing sorcery or of plotting against the pope through the use of demonic magic well into the 1320s.²⁸ The bull issued by John, *Super illius Specula* (1326), explicitly associated magic with heresy. This decree also condemned and excommunicated all those who practiced forms of ceremonial magic and necromancy – invoking demons. John's impact on the development of demonology has been singled out as a significant step in the creation of the devil worshipping conspiracy of 'demonized' practitioners of magic of the fifteenth century: "The rapid development of demonology [in the fifteenth century] had been well prepared by a pope who believed in the lucid considerations of the obscure zones where the devil operated".²⁹ Alain Boureau explains that while John's

²⁶ Richard Raiswell and David R. Winter, *The Medieval Devil: A Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), p. 295.

²⁷ Alain Boureau, *Satan hérétique: Histoire de la démonologie (1280-1330)* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2004), p. 36.

²⁸ Boureau, *Satan hérétique*, p. 54; Bailey, *Magic and Superstition*, p. 122; Hutton, *The Witch*, p. 163.

²⁹ Boureau, *Satan hérétique*, pp. 59-60.

demonization of his political opponents did much to link the elements that would define satanic sorcery – magic, heresy and devil worship – a number of factors had prevented the outbreak of large scale trials against sorcerers in the fourteenth century, what Jean Patrice-Boudet calls the “delay in igniting the fires”.³⁰ First, the political nature of the accusations excluded any consideration regarding the grievances of ordinary people. Secondly, the competent jurisdictions – inquisitors or secular judges – were not involved in the political trials initiated by John. In fact, John was reluctant and even “mistrusting” of handing over these cases to inquisitors who were not always inclined to consider the political implications of their pursuit for religious purity.³¹ In 1323, Pope John XXII had to write twice to Dominican inquisitors in Carcassonne to not be excessive in their pursuit against the nobleman, Sir Jean l’Archeveque, who was accused of heresy by practicing illicit forms of magic. John had to intervene personally in the matter to prevent the issue from becoming a political problem between the Church and the French crown.³² The accusations against John’s political opponents were adjudicated in “special proceedings” by members of the clergy handpicked by the pope. On February 27, 1318, John wrote to the bishop of Fréjus, the prior of Saint-Anthony and the provost of Clermont-Ferrand to ask them to initiate judicial action which would result in a summary judgment with no possibility of appeal against specific members of the clergy who were practicing “necromancy, geomancy and other magical arts (...) arts of the

³⁰ Jean Patrice-Boudet, *Entre science et nigromance: astrologie, divination et magie dans l'occident médiéval, XIIIe-XVe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006), p. 501.

³¹ Boureau, *Satan hérétique*, p. 56.

³² J.M. Vidal, “Le sieur de Parthenay et l’Inquisition (1323-1325)” in *Bulletin historique et philologique* (1903), pp. 414-434. For the letters, see, J. M. Vidal, *Bullaire de l’inquisition française au XIVe siècle et jusqu’à la fin du grand schisme* (Paris: Librairie Letouzet, 1913), pp. 126-127.

demons, derived from a pestilent association of men and evil angels”.³³ Boureau emphasizes the redemptive nature of the inquisition characterized by confession, absolution and redemption, which discounted the mass burning of practitioners of magic. These trials thus lacked any of the ‘mass’ conspiratorial elements assigned to heretics and sorcerers in the next century.

However, in the fourteenth century, lepers and especially Jews were being accused of ‘imaginary’ conspiratorial and anti-Christian criminal behaviour: mass fraud in the form of usury, the poisoning of wells spreading the plague and magical rituals involving the blood sucking of Christian babies and desecrating consecrated Hosts.³⁴ In one instance in the south of France, these beliefs led to popular massacres against Jews and lepers between 1321 and 1323. Forged letters and documents were then used in order to construct a plot against Christianity, beginning with the kingdom of France. These documents implicated the Muslim viceroy of Grenada, French Jews and lepers in a plot to murder French Catholics in a period when popular anti-Jewish sentiment and fears concerning the plague were fueled by anxieties of divine retribution. Phillip V of France exploited these ‘imaginary crimes’ with threats of mass persecutions and the expulsion of Jews from the kingdom in order to extract large sums of money, from the Jews in particular.³⁵ In the fourteenth century, the disparate elements that would be integrated together to form the concept of satanic sorcery were still in a process of coalescence.

³³ For the letter issued by Pope XXII, see Henry Charles Lea, *Materials Toward a History of Witchcraft*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), p. 159.

³⁴ Carlo Ginzburg and Elsa Bonan, “Présomptions sur le sabbat” in *Annales, Histoire et Sciences Sociales*, no. 2 (1984), p. 342.

³⁵ Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 68.

The persecution of Jews and lepers provided a template for the later projection of popular fears and anxieties onto practitioners of magic. Another element that explicitly linked magic with devil worship was the practice of ceremonial magic in the form of necromancy. The elaborate magical rituals involved in invoking demons were part of the accusations made at the trials of Pope John XXII's political enemies. The invocation of demons resembled the ritual of exorcism, but with the essential difference that exorcisms were meant to expel demons, not the intention to invite them and interact with them for personal gain. Necromancy made use of Latin for the conjuring, liturgical elements for controlling and compelling the spirit or the demon and manuals that detailed the precise steps of the ritual. Members of the literate clergy were often those who practiced such rituals in the Middle Ages.³⁶ For preachers and inquisitors, necromancy thus constituted a clear example that magic was inherently demonic. Consequently, popular magic was progressively assimilated into this conception.

The illicit practice of magic was initially under the jurisdiction of inquisitorial tribunals because magical rituals were first a crime against the faith, but in the fifteenth century, magic became a proof of devil worship. The accused renounced God and the Christian faith (apostasy) and adored the devil (idolatry). As such, demonic magic was defined in the fifteenth century as one of the worst forms of heresy.³⁷ The medieval inquisitions had produced a series of transformations that help to explain the creation and conception of satanic witchcraft. The Dominican inquisitor Bernard Gui's (1261-

³⁶ Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), p. 37.

³⁷ For the identification of magic and sorcery with diabolical heresy see Michael Bailey, *Battling Demons: Witchcraft, Heresy and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2003; Martine Ostorero, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, Kathrin Utz Tremp (eds.), *L'Imaginaire du sabbath: édition critique des textes les plus anciens (1430 c. - 1440 c.)* (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 1999).

1331) inquisitorial manual *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis* (*The practice of inquisition into heretical depravity*) (1324) defines divination and ceremonial magic as forms of heresy. Gui had received the directive issued to all inquisitors from Pope John XXII in 1320 to take action against sorcerers and diviners who invoked demons and his manual shows that Gui believed that such matters fell under the jurisdiction of inquisitors. Another Dominican inquisitor, Nicolas Eymeric (1320-1399) wrote the influential *Directorium inquisitorum* (*Directory of Inquisitors*) in 1376. Eymeric developed theological theories to demonstrate that most forms of magic and sorcery were demonic, and that demonic magic was fundamentally heretical.³⁸

Secular courts in the fourteenth century also began taking an interest in crimes involving magic. In 1390, the Parlement of Paris declared that crimes involving sorcery fell within its own jurisdiction.³⁹ The inquisitorial procedure itself was also an important feature that helped to create the mythology of the sabbath. Based in Roman law, inquisitorial procedure permitted the courts to control the entire judicial procedure, from accusation to condemnation. The inquisitorial procedure allowed the courts to investigate crimes and interrogate suspects. This aspect of the inquisitorial procedure made crimes committed in secret, such as heresy and harmful magic, easier to prosecute. Heretics often equivocated, outright lied or made-up stories to avoid conviction when confronted by inquisitors. Interrogations under torture became allowed, under strict circumstances, by Pope Alexander IV's decree *Ad extirpanda* in 1252. Before torture could be used, it was necessary to establish that a crime had been committed and either the testimony of an eyewitness or a certain amount of circumstantial evidence that

³⁸ Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe*, pp. 123-125.

³⁹ Hutton, *The Witch*, p. 165.

implicated the suspect. Torture became a means to extract the confession of stubborn suspects.⁴⁰ Confessions were instrumental for adjudicating circumstantial cases, with no supporting physical evidence, that rested on rumours and hearsay testimony. The inquisition refined judicial procedures and helped to transform legal systems across Europe into more sophisticated operations. Medieval secular justice had been based on the accusatorial system in which a criminal action was both initiated and prosecuted by a private person, who was usually the injured party or a member of their family. An accusatorial trial operated as a kind of competition between the accuser and the accused in front of a judge.

Trials by ordeal were rarely used to determine the guilt of the accused during the Middle Ages. The swimming test was occasionally used as trial by ordeal for sorcery. If an accused witch floated in the body of water blessed by a priest, it meant she was guilty since holy water rejected evil. However, priests were banned from participating in trials by ordeal after the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Secular courts progressively began adopting the inquisitorial procedure over the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. For Brian Levack: “The introduction of inquisitorial procedure made possible the prosecution and conviction of witches on an unprecedented scale, especially in Germany, southern France, and Switzerland”.⁴¹

2.2 – Saint Vincent Ferrer’s Apocalyptic Sermons in the Alps

During the first decade of the fifteenth century, the Dominican Vincent Ferrer’s apocalyptic sermons between 1399 and 1409 laid a demonological foundation in exactly

⁴⁰ Brian Levack, “Witchcraft and the Law” in Levack, *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, p. 466.

⁴¹ Levack, “Witchcraft and the Law”, p. 473.

the region of the western Alps where the fusion of the Waldensian heresy (*Vauderie*) and satanic magic took place. The journey of St. Vincent Ferrer in the Waldensian valleys of Dauphiné is chronicled in two famous letters addressed to the head of the Dominican Order, Jean de Puinoix in December 1403 and to Pope Benedict XIII in July 1412, in which he explains the development of the apocalyptic theme of his sermons along the years.⁴² Vincent Ferrer traveled through a country affected by intensive inquisitorial work where he preached on the arrival of the Antichrist and the imminence of the End of the World and Judgement Day. He preached outside two or three times every day because the crowds were too large to be accommodated in churches. He attended mass daily, and he was forced to write his sermons during his travels. He describes in a few lines the type of world he was faced with:

I have found many valleys infested by the Vaudois (...) I have realised that all these errors, all these heresies principally come from the absence of preachers. For thirty years, no apostle has visited them, except Vaudois heretics who come from Aquileia (Italy) twice a year.

I must now enter the diocese of Lausanne, where the people commonly adore the sun as a god, especially the peasants, by practicing a [sun] cult and addressing it respectful prayers in the morning. The bishop of Lausanne even made a two or three days walk to come to me, humbly begging me with all his heart for me to visit his diocese, where there are many valleys inhabited by heretics on the borders of Germany and of Savoy, untamed and audacious.⁴³

⁴² This period is characterized by the Great Schism of the papacy. Ferrer and the master-general Puinoix were obedient to the Avignon Pope Benedict XIII. Paravy, "Remarques", p. 143. The letters to the head of the Dominican order and Benedict XIII are printed in appendix in D. Fages, *Histoire de saint Vincent Ferrer* (Paris: Librairie des Archives Nationales, 1901), p.XXI-XXIII and p.LXXVI-LXXXV, respectively.

⁴³ Translated from Latin to French by Fages: "J'ai trouvé de nombreuses vallées infestées de Vaudois (...) Je me suis aperçu que toutes ces erreurs, toutes ces hérésies venaient principalement de l'absence de prédicateurs. Depuis trente ans, nul apôtre n'avait paru parmi eux, si ce n'est des hérétiques Vaudois venant d'Aquilee deux fois par ans. Je dois maintenant entrer dans le diocèse de Lausanne, où les gens adorent communément et manifestement le soleil comme un Dieu, surtout les paysans, lui rendant un culte et lui adressant le matin des prières avec respect. L'évêque de Lausanne a fait même deux ou trois jours de marche pour venir à moi, me priant humblement de tout cœur de visiter son diocèse, où il y a

Ferrer described and deplored the widespread practice of non-Christian rituals, peasants who adore the sun and who believe in the powers of soothsayers and the intensive work and effectiveness of heretical missionaries. He explained how God had called upon him to preach in the high Alpine valleys, populated by those who spread heresy, in other words, false prophets and missionaries of the Antichrist. Many people who attended his sermons implored his help and healing. It was especially those who were possessed by demons that requested his help and healing to exorcise them. For Ferrer, this confirmed the way he perceived his role as a catalyst in manifestations of demonic anguish. As a combatant for God's glory, he attracted demonic forces and his presence alone provoked a confrontation between good and evil. In the 1412 letter to pope Benedict XIII, Ferrer wrote:

In many parts of the world, I have seen many persons possessed by the devil, who were brought to one of the priests of our company for exorcism. When the priest began to exorcise them they spoke openly of the time of Antichrist, in accordance with what has already been said, crying out loudly and terribly so that all the bystanders could hear them, and declaring that they were forced by Christ and against their own will and malice, to reveal to men the truth as given above, so that they might save themselves by true penance. These revelations have the effect of leading to contrition and penance the numerous Christians standing round. But when the demons are questioned, or even conjured to tell the truth of the birth place of Antichrist, they will not reveal it (...)

From all that has been said above, I hold the opinion, which I think to be well founded, though not sufficiently proven for me to preach it, that nine years have already elapsed since the birth of Antichrist. But this I do preach with certitude and security, the Lord confirming my word by many signs, that in an exceedingly short time will come the reign of Antichrist and the end of the world.

beaucoup de vallées peuplées d'hérétiques sur les frontières de l'Allemagne et de la Savoie, téméraires et audacieux". Letter to Jean Puynoix, translated in French in D. Fages, *Histoire de saint Vincent Ferrer*, pp. 128-131.

This, most Holy Father, is what I am preaching concerning the time of Antichrist and the end of the world, subject to the correction and determination of Your Holiness.⁴⁴

On superstition and magic, Ferrer preached that “Do not believe neither in soothsayers nor in sorcerers. Believe only in God – and the name of Jesus Christ will take effect”. He goes on to illustrate his argument to the audience with an *exemplum*: a woman who suffered from a chronic illness went to see a soothsayer. He gave her a paper on which he wrote: “Dame Julienne has a chronic fever; God has damned her and all her company”. He provided her with an amulet in which she invested all her devotion. “The outcome is evident. We must believe strongly. And if we must endure evil, we must pronounce often and devotedly the name of Jesus, while signing ourselves. Let us have faith and we will heal.” With this *exemplum*, Ferrer illustrates how the woman condemned herself to eternal damnation by consulting a soothsayer in order to cure her illness. She ‘invested’ her faith in magical objects and rituals rather than God and Jesus Christ, thus condemning herself to eternal torment. The moral message of the story conveys to the audience that only God has the true power to heal and save the soul.

⁴⁴ Nam cum in pluribus partibus mundi viderim quamplures obsessos a daemonibus, qui ducebantur ad quemdam acerdotem societatis nostrae, ut conjurarentur ab eo; tandem cum conjurari inciperent per eundem sacerdotem. Manifeste diceban de tempore Antichristi, concordantes cum his quae supradicta sunt, terribiliter et audibiliter omnibus circumstantibus acclamando, et dicendo se coaetos per Christum, ut contra eorum voluntatem et malitiam, verutate supradicta homnibus praedicarent, ut sic homines per veram poenitentiam se pararent. Quibus sic clamantibus, omnes fere Christiani, qui in maxima multitudine quotidie confluebant cum magnis fletibus, et lamentationibus cordis compungebantur. Et quam plures eorum ad veram poenitentiam ducebantur. Verum tamen interrogati Daemones, ac pluries conjurati de loco nativitatis Antichirsti, noluerunt ullatenus revelare (...) Unde ex omnibus supradictis, in mente mea colligitur opinio, et credentia verisimilis livet non scientia certa et praedicabilis, de nativitate Antichristi jam transarta per novem annos. Attamen praedictam conclusionem, quae dicit quod cito, et bene cito, ac calde breviter erunt ubique, Domino cooperante, et sermonem confirmante sequentibus signis. Illaec sunt, Sanctissime Pater, quae de tempore Antichristi, et fine mundi discurrendo per mundum praedico, sub correctione, et determinatione Sanctis vestrae. Latin transcription of the letter to Pope Benedict XIII in D. Fages, *Histoire de saint Vincent Ferrer*, appendix pp. LXXVI-LXXXV.

On the subject of Judgement Day, Ferrer preached that Christ will command the earth to open and the fissure, emitting an unbearable odour of sulfur, will extend from each person's location unto Rome. Unrepentant sinners who are guilty of the same sin will receive identical punishments. Ferrer gave graphic descriptions of the nine levels of hell and the graver the sin, the graver the torment. The devil becomes aware when an unrepentant sinner is about to die and sends "a great number of demons" to drag the person's soul into hell. The demons open the fiery dungeon and the soul cries out "Oh! Is that my dwelling?" Ferrer labeled those who practiced sorcery or those who consulted them as idolaters and apostates who renounce God.⁴⁵

In forensic detail, Ferrer provides biblical references to Judgement Day and the Antichrist, with a heavy reliance on Daniel 12. From these biblical citations, Ferrer extrapolates four signs that will predict the end of the world.⁴⁶ These signs and predictions are announcements of the arrival of the Antichrist. The world will be ripe when enough people have become deceived by the devil. In a sermon on Judgement Day, Ferrer preached that magic is the work of the devil to illustrate how demonic corruption operates:

Since the people of the world sin against God by having recourse to the works of the devil, such as divination and fortune telling in their necessities—for instance, in order to find things they have lost, or to obtain health or children, instead of laying their needs before the omnipotent

⁴⁵ Josianne Canbanas (ed), Patrick Gifreu (translator), *Saint Vincent Ferrer, Sermons* (Perpignan: Éditions de la Merci, 2010), For sermons on Judgment Day see pp. 106-109, for sermons on superstitions and witchcraft, see pp. 143-144.

⁴⁶ The four signs will appear in 1) the sun, 2) the moon, 3) the stars and 4) the fire that will consume the four parts of the Earth (East, West, North and South). See Sister Mary Catherine, *Angel of the Judgement: A Life of Vincent Ferrer* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1954), Chapter XI, pp. 102-117. Chapter XI is a sermon on the end of the world delivered by Ferrer for the second Sunday of Advent. The sermon is translated by Albert G. Judy, O.P., from a three volume Latin compilation of around 400 sermons delivered by Ferrer that span the liturgical year, published in Antwerp, c. 1570.

God—therefore God permits them to be deceived by the works of the demons.⁴⁷

The demonic corruption of well intentioned, perhaps naïve, Christians constitutes a central part of Ferrer's 'end of the world' paradigm, giving it the tone of a demonic conspiracy:

In the time of Antichrist, the Church, typified by the moon, will be eclipsed; because then she will not give her light, since Christians will no longer work miracles by reason of their sanctity; but Antichrist and his followers will work miracles, not true miracles, but false ones having the appearance of true miracles, in order that they may deceive the people.⁴⁸ (...)

You must know that Antichrist will perform other prodigies by the power of demons, and these will be true miracles according to the nature of things in themselves, but false in regard to the definition of a miracle (i.e., by the power of God). For he will cause both images and babes of a month old to speak. The followers of Antichrist will question these statues or babies, and they will make answer concerning this lord who has come in the latter times, affirming that he is the savior. The devil will move their lips and form the words they utter when they declare [the] Antichrist to be the true savior of the world; and in this way he will cause the destruction of many souls.⁴⁹

In his letters to his superiors, Ferrer deplored the dramatic impact caused by the absence of proper religious instruction. Void of effective preachers, it was left to the inquisitors to eliminate heresy from the region. Ferrer explained that those who heard his sermons called him the "Angel of the apocalypse". He exorcised those possessed by demons and could not compel the demons to reveal the place of birth of the Antichrist, but they revealed that he had been born in 1403. Ferrer related that he had received two reports in

⁴⁷ Translation by Judy, Ferrer's sermon for second Sunday of Advent from Antwerp volume in S.M.C, *Angel of Judgement*, p. 111.

⁴⁸ Translation by Judy, Ferrer's sermon for second Sunday of Advent from Antwerp volume in S.M.C, *Angel of Judgement*, p. 109.

⁴⁹ Translation by Judy, Ferrer's sermon for second Sunday of Advent from Antwerp volume in S.M.C, *Angel of Judgement*, p. 111.

1403 that the Antichrist had been born. The first report came from a man in Tuscany who had been informed by a Waldensian hermit that the Antichrist had just been born. In Piedmont, a Venetian merchant related that two Franciscan novices in a convent had both awoken at the same time crying out that the Antichrist was born.⁵⁰

In Fribourg, between March 10 and 13, 1404, Ferrer delivered a series of sermons announcing the arrival of the Antichrist and the apocalypse. The arrival of the Antichrist was immanent, which will cause the arrival of Judgement Day. The state of the world was ripe for the End. The resurrection of the dead will precede the second coming of Christ. During the Final Judgement, according to Matthew 25, Christ will preside as judge to separate those who will be saved from those who will be damned, destined to burn eternally. Ferrer believed that only 45 days will separate the death of the Antichrist and Judgement Day, according to a literal reading of Daniel 12.⁵¹ The sermons Ferrer preached in Fribourg in 1404 are consistent with other sermons he preached and with the letters he wrote to the pope in 1412. In Fribourg, Ferrer addressed four questions on the apocalypse in a single sermon, concerning 1) how the Antichrist would seduce humans away from the faith, 2) why God allowed the Antichrist to operate, 3) when the End of the world would occur, 4) and how humans could resist the Antichrist. Four years later in 1408, Ferrer delivered three different sermons in Montpellier devoted to the first three topics.⁵² In both these places, Ferrer reprimanded member of the audience for their

⁵⁰ Paravy, "Remarques", p. 146.

⁵¹ For the content of Ferrer's sermons preached in Fribourg, see Sigismund Brettler, *San Vicente Ferrer und sein literarischer Nachlass* (Munster: Aschendorff, 1924), pp. 173-195.

⁵² Philip Daileader, *Saint Vincent Ferrer, His World and Life, Religion and Society in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p 55. Ferrer's sermon delivered March 10, 1404, in Fribourg is found in Francisco Gimeno Blay and María Luz Mandingorra Llavata, (eds.), Daniel Gozalbo Gimeno (trans.), *Sermones de Cuaresma en Suiza, 1404 (Couvent des Cordeliers, ms. 62)* (Valencia: Ajuntament de

moral failings: using divination, giving to the Church its “scabbiest and sickest animals” when paying for the tithe, having sex with prostitutes, having incestuous sexual relations, practicing bestiality and not respecting the Church’s orders of excommunication, to which Ferrer stated that he would rather lose a finger, a hand or his head, than be excommunicated for a single hour.⁵³ Ferrer repeated the same *exempla* in Fribourg in 1404 and in Montpellier in 1408 in order to illustrate the four ways in which the Antichrist would deceive Christians: 1) with gifts and pleasure, 2) through false miracles (as discussed above) 3) disputations on matters of doctrine and 4) by causing torment and suffering.⁵⁴ Ferrer described that one of the torments inflicted by the Antichrist will be to rip babes from their mother’s arms and quarter them in front of their mothers’ who will be powerless to stop it. Relevantly, infanticide was a common accusation made against witches. By describing in graphic and horrific detail the torments of infanticide by the Antichrist, Ferrer was playing on the worst fears of the parents among his audience in order to emphasise how Christians were all in spiritual jeopardy. Ferrer preached that it would be useless to dispute with the Antichrist and his followers, in other words, heretics.

In Fribourg, Ferrer said that through the great power of the Antichrist, theologians who attempt to dispute with him or his followers will be struck dumb; in Montpellier

Valencia, 2009), p. 57; See also Brettell, *San Vicente Ferrer*, pp. 173-195 for his German translation of Ferrer’s Fribourg sermons. Five sermons Ferrer preached in Montpellier in December 1408 are edited and published in Latin in Franco Morenzioni’s article, “La prédication de Vincent Ferrer à Montpellier en décembre 1408”, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, vol. 74 (2004), pp. 225-271, see p. 287 for the sermon delivered December 3, 1408, that describes the four methods the Antichrist will use to deceive Christians. The sermons edited by Morenzioni were copied by the priest Claude Pirusset in 1445 from an original transcription. The copies made by Pirusset are found in the manuscript at the Bibliothèque cantonale universitaire de Lausanne: BCU G 756, fol. 350r-365r, attributed to *magister Vicentius*.

⁵³ Morenzioni, “La prédication de Vincent Ferrer”, pp. 252-256.

⁵⁴ Morenzioni, “La prédication de Vincent Ferrer”, pp. 231-232.

Ferrer said that they would speak gibberish. However, in the sermon delivered December 3, 1408, in Montpellier, Ferrer held theologians responsible for their lack of ability to overcome the Antichrist's powers. God would allow the demons to interfere with their ability to speak because theologians had neglected their study of the Bible to the point that thirteen-year-old Jews knew the Bible better than they did. Instead of learning scripture, theologians study "various, futile and deceptive sophistry from poets such as Virgil. (...) Accordingly, through their confusion, God allows the demons to bind their tongue".⁵⁵ In the same sermon, Ferrer told the audience that faith could not be defended through reason and that believers should recite the scriptures if they were ever confronted by the Antichrist instead of trying to argue their beliefs. Anticipating disputations, the Antichrist and his followers had prepared counter arguments in order to confuse believers: "And we ought not to believe because of this fact, that our faith is based in reason, but in obedience and devotion, because we have thus been commanded to do so".⁵⁶ This sermon is a clear example of how Ferrer directed his audience to respond when confronted with heretics, and how the audience could and should associate them with the Antichrist and the devil.

According to Franco Morenzioni, Ferrer preached in Fribourg in 1404 that only forty days would separate the death of the Antichrist and Judgement Day, and that in Montpellier in 1408 he preached that the interval would be forty-five days, while

⁵⁵ "Dico quod demones alligabunt eis linguam ratio prima est quare dicitur magistri in theologia non curant studere in Biblia, quia plus sciet unus judeus 13 annorum quam unus magister in theologia, qui magis diligenter student in futilibus variis, sicut sophismata, Virgilium et alii poete vani. (...) Et ideo propter confussionem eorum, Deus hoc permittit ut demones eis ligent linguam". Ferrer's sermon preached in Montpellier December 3, 1408, in Morenzioni, "La prédication de Vincent Ferrer", p. 246.

⁵⁶ "Et non debemus credere propter hoc quod fundatur ex ratione, ymo solum propter devocionem obediencialem, quia ita mandatur fieri". Ferrer's sermon preached in Montpellier December 3, 1408, in Morenzioni, "La prédication de Vincent Ferrer", p. 247.

Pierrette Paravy gives forty-five days for Ferrer's sermons preached in Fribourg. Both Morenzioni and Paravy cite Ferrer's edited 1404 Fribourg sermons translated into German and found in Sigismund Brettle's *San Vicente Ferrer*, published in 1924.⁵⁷ The content of the Fribourg sermons is known because they were transcribed by the Franciscan friar Friedrich von Amberg in his thirteen *reportationes* of sermons Ferrer preached in and around Fribourg between March 9 and 18, 1404.⁵⁸ Whatever the precise amount of days given by Ferrer in Fribourg in 1404 and in Montpellier in 1408, all the details related to the apocalyptic content of the sermons he delivered varied only slightly between both places.⁵⁹ In the sermons delivered in Montpellier in 1408 and in his letter to Pope Benedict XII in 1412, Ferrer reported the year of the birth of the Antichrist to be 1403, based on the two reports he received from a hermit and from a merchant mentioned above. In his letter to the pope, Ferrer wrote that demons had also revealed the time of birth of the Antichrist during exorcisms performed in Lombardy, but that they could not be compelled to reveal its location as he wrote in the letter cited above:

⁵⁷ Franco Morenzioni, "Vincent Ferrer et la prédication mendicante à Genève au XVe siècle", in Franco Morenzioni (ed.), *Sur les routes des Alpes: Religieux, marchands et animaux dans la Suisse occidentale (XIIIe-XVe siècles)* (Tournhout: Brepols, 2019), p. 94. See Morenzioni, "La prédication de Vincent Ferrer", pp. 258-259 for Ferrer's Montpellier sermon that gives forty-five days; Paravy, "Remarques", p. 146 cites Ferrer's Fribourg sermons in Brettle, *San Vicente Ferrer*, pp. 173-195; Morenzioni, "La prédication de Vincent Ferrer", p. 229 cites almost exactly the same pages as Paravy in Brettle, *San Vicente Ferrer*, pp. 177-194.

⁵⁸ Friedrich von Amberg, *Reprotationes*, ms. 62 of the Bibliothèque des Cordeliers (Franciscan Library) in the Fribourg collection. This manuscript is part of a collection from the Franciscan Library of Fribourg that is held by the National Library of Switzerland. These sermons are the edited sources published in Brettle, *San Vicente Ferrer*, pp. 173-194 and in Blay and Llavata, *Sermones de Cuaresma en Suiza, 1404*, cited the above.

⁵⁹ Ferrer's belief that only forty or forty-five days would separate the death of the Antichrist and Judgement Day was an original contribution to the eschatological debate discussed among theologians. Ferrer arrived at this number from a literal reading of Daniel 12. This specific interval was debated among other theologians who mostly rejected the notion that it was possible to know with any certainty the exact time of the apocalypse. See Daileader, *Saint Vincent Ferrer*, p. 144 for the theological debates on the time of the apocalypse.

“When the priest began to exorcise them they spoke openly of the time of Antichrist, in accordance with what has already been said (i.e. confirming the reports of the hermit and the merchant)”. Even though demons are deceitful by nature, Ferrer decided to believe them because he had two other confirmations and because the demons regretted having revealed this secret: “[the demons were] crying out loudly and terribly so that all the bystanders could hear them and declaring that they were forced by Christ and against their own will and malice, to reveal to men the truth as given above”.⁶⁰

However, Ferrer did not mention the Antichrist or his sermons on the apocalypse in his letter to his superior Jean de Puinoix in 1403. He wrote that letter the same year the Antichrist was allegedly born. In his letter to Jean de Puinoix, Ferrer reported on his tireless work against Waldensian heretics, deplored the non-Christian practices of peasants and described his success in converting many of them, all of which conformed to the type of mission Dominican friars were expected to accomplish. Ferrer’s silence in his letter to Puinoix concerning his belief in the immanence of the apocalypse and his sermons against the Antichrist was probably intentional, if not “misleading”, and reflects how he wanted to represent himself as accomplishing the mission that had been expected from him by the Master General of his order: “(...) in depicting himself as directly and (at least by implication) only preaching against heretics, Vincent similarly misled the Master General and thereby misled future generations as well”.⁶¹ He also failed to mention the birth of the Antichrist in the sermons he delivered in Fribourg in

⁶⁰ “Manifeste diceban de tempore Antichristi, concordantes cum his quae supradicta sunt, terribiliter et audibiliter omnibus circumstantibus acclamando, et dicendo se coetos per Christum, ut contra eorum voluntatem et malitiam, verutate supradicta hominibus praedicarent, ut sic homines per veram poenitentiam se pararent”. Latin transcription of the letter to Pope Benedict XIII in D. Fages, *Histoire de saint Vincent Ferrer*, appendix pp. LXXVI-LXXXV.

⁶¹ Daileader, *Saint Vincent Ferrer*, p. 51.

1404, although he did reference the Antichrist and the apocalypse extensively in those sermons as described above. Later, he repeated that he had already received the reports of the birth in 1403 in the sermons he delivered in Montpellier in 1408, at Valladolid (Spain) in 1411 and in his letter to the pope in 1412. Perhaps he had not wished to speculate on the timing of Judgement Day in 1403 and 1404.⁶² However, institutional and professional expectations help to explain his reluctance to publicize his true belief that the Antichrist was already born and operating in the world, an idea he preached consistently after 1408, if not before.

In his sermons, Ferrer associated magic with fraud and the work of the Antichrist along with his demon followers. On December 3, 1408, Ferrer told the audience in Montpellier that the Antichrist was born in 1403 from the report of a hermit “who had sought me out in many places so that he could make these things known to me, for he had heard it said that I was preaching about the coming of the Antichrist”.⁶³ He then described the four ways that the Antichrist will deceive humans. Ferrer then explicitly associated the practice of magic with the devil. In that same sermon, Ferrer preached that magical cures are “diabolical”. Practitioners who offer medical remedies that are “not natural” are “sorcerers who perform magic” and “do evil” in order to exploit people for money: “there are an infinite number of people who perform such things, and, therefore, will be condemned”. Ferrer warned his audience to avoid sorcerers and magic because when the Antichrist arrives, Christians will need to be in good standing with

⁶² Daileader, *Saint Vincent Ferrer*, p. 50.

⁶³ “Et ipsi hermita per multa loca me investigaverat ut illa posset michi manifestare, attento quod audiverat dici quod ego predicabam adventum antichristi”. Ferrer’s sermon delivered December 5, 1408, the *thema* of that sermon: “On the arrival of the Antichrist, that will soon happen and according to certain revelations that have already occurred since five years ago”. Morenzioni, “La prédication de Vincent Ferrer”, p. 266.

Christ if they wish to be saved.⁶⁴ Ferrer's exhortation against sorcerers and magic is contained in the same sermon delivered December 3, 1408, detailing the four ways the Antichrist will deceive Christians, false miracles (magic) being one of them. This constitutes another clear example how Ferrer was instructing the audience to associate heretical beliefs and practices – magic and sorcery – with the Antichrist and demons.

Ferrer and his work as an itinerant Dominican preacher have been analysed through many different historical approaches. Historians of religion emphasize his role as confessor to the Avignon Pope Benedict XIII, his canonization in 1455, and his prolific work as an itinerant preacher.⁶⁵ Sermon historians focus on the content of his sermons which reveals a message insisting on repentance, the conversion of heretics and infidels, the laxity and failings of friars and the condemnation of heterodox beliefs and practices contrary to the teachings of the Church, not to mention his continuous announcement of the immanence of the apocalypse.⁶⁶ Historians agree that Ferrer had a profound impact on his contemporaries, both on his peers and audiences, demonstrated by how he served as a model of Observance for other friars and by how his sermons were able to draw enormous crowds. Ferrer's power to expel demons drew the attention of another Dominican reformer, Johannes Nider, who praised Ferrer in his *Formicarius* (1437), discussed in the next chapter, which was one of the first works to describe the

⁶⁴ "Et ideo illi qui faciunt alias medicinas, nisi sint medicine naturales, male faciunt. Sicut isti sortilegi qui faciunt ista sortilegia, et quando quis est vulneratus dicunt illam fatuet: tres boni fratres, et cet[era]. Et istud est opus dyabolicum. Et sunt infiniti qui talia faciunt, et ideo dampnatur quomodoque faciant illa, nisi in nomine ihesu, ut probatum est et habetur Marchi ultimo capitulo. Et si vis habere bonam armaturam contra istum maledictum antichristum quando veniet et faciet ista miracular, dic sibi quod faciat in nomine ihesum et videbis si pterit facere". Ferrer's sermon delivered December 3, 1408 in Montpellier, in Morenzioni, "La prédication de Vincent Ferrer", pp. 245-246.

⁶⁵ Laura Ackerman Smoller, *The Saint and the Chopped-Up Baby: The Cult of Vincent Ferrer in Medieval & Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), see pp. 32-35 for Ferrer's relationship to the pope as confessor, and chapter 2, pp. 49-84, discuss the process of Ferrer's canonisation.

⁶⁶ Morenzioni, "La prédication de Vincent Ferrer", p. 231.

secret gathering of devil worshippers in the fifteenth century.⁶⁷ Historical disagreements become apparent in the contrast of interpretations of his apocalyptic rhetoric, as Philip Daileader notes that “twentieth- and twenty-first-century historians have consistently downplayed the friar’s apocalypticism”.⁶⁸ Some historians, such as Carlo Delcorno, qualify Ferrer’s apocalypticism as a means to bring people to repentance.⁶⁹ Hervé Martin sees Ferrer’s “évolutions apocalyptiques” as an effective and theatrical way of gaining the attention of the crowd.⁷⁰ Delcorno and Martin are correct that Ferrer’s apocalyptic rhetoric was a way to bring people to repent and that Ferrer did use it as a tool to make his message more dramatic and urgent. However, these interpretations imply that Ferrer was only using apocalypticism strategically in order to transmit his actual message of religious reform and repentance. Ferrer’s obsession with the Antichrist and his letter to Pope Benedict XII contradict this view. At the end of his letter to the Pope in 1412, Ferrer ended by deferring to his authority: “This, most Holy Father, is what I am preaching concerning the time of [the] Antichrist and the end of the world, subject to the correction and determination of Your Holiness”. Ferrer’s deference to the pope and the fact that he omitted to report his apocalyptic message from his letter to his superior in 1403 show that he was conscious that this message might alarm some members of the clergy in positions of authority who did not necessarily agree with

⁶⁷ Bailey, *Battling Demons*, p. 100; Smoller, *The Saint and the Chopped-up Baby*, p. 32.

⁶⁸ Daileader, *Saint Vincent Ferrer*, p. 199.

⁶⁹ Carlo Delcorno, “Da Vicent Ferrer a Bernardino da Siena: Il rinnovamento della predicazione alla fine del medio evo”, in Paul-Bernard Hodel and Franco Morenzioni (eds.), *Mirificus praedicator, A l’occasion du sixième centenaire du passage de saint Vincent Ferrier en pays romand. Actes du Colloque d’Estavayer-le-Lac (7-9 octobre 2004)* (Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, 2006), p. 15.

⁷⁰ Hervé Martin, “La mission de saint Vincent Ferrier en Bretagne, 1418–1419: un exercice mesuré de la violence prophétique”, *Association bretonne et union régionaliste bretonne*, vol. 106 (1997), p. 136.

him.⁷¹ Ferrer's true beliefs and motivations are made evident by these deliberate actions and by his consistent message that the birth of the Antichrist was a sign that Judgement Day was imminent. The lasting impact of his apocalyptic preaching is demonstrated by the transcription and preservation of these sermons.⁷²

Since Ferrer was not directly involved in the trials against practitioners of magic of the fifteenth-century Alps, the biographers and historians who have analysed his sermons have not focused on how the two were related. However, witchcraft historians have connected Ferrer's apocalyptic preaching with other factors that combined together helped to create the myth of a demonic conspiracy and its resulting judicial repression. Signaling out the "passage of Vincent Ferrer", Pierrette Paravy argues that the efforts of clerics to fully Christianise the peasants of Dauphiné explain in part why trials against satanic sorcerers occurred there beginning in the 1420s. She emphasizes the role of Ferrer's rhetoric in structuring the social and religious conscience of the faithful: "Can we precisely explain the spiritual content of the faith that his sermons pedagogically expressed so well? In fact, this explanation of his sermons is less relevant than the consciousness of those who were designated to be damned".⁷³ In Ferrer's sermons, those who are damned are those who are obstinate, impenitent, usurers, blasphemers and perjurers and who will all become the occupants of hell. Ferrer's sermons also illustrated how the Antichrist manifested himself through miracles, false miracles (magic) that inverted the natural order with the goal of deceiving credulous Christians. The Antichrist worked through deceptions that multiplied anti-Christian forms of behaviours

⁷¹ Daileader, *Saint Vincent Ferrer*, p. 40.

⁷² Morenzioni emphasizes how Ferrer's sermons concerning the apocalypse were transcribed and recopied by mendicant friars: "La prédication de Vincent Ferrier", p. 230.

⁷³ Paravy, "Remarques", p. 152.

and beliefs, which Dominican preachers and inquisitors interpreted as manifestations of heresy. From this perspective, it was not only the conscience of the individual that needed to be purified, but also the temporal world that was corrupted by the presence of the Antichrist, who was operating since 1403, and his demon followers who were possessing innocent Christians, all of which justified the coming of the apocalypse. Judgement Day would purify the world and separate the true Christians from their false counterparts, the followers of the Antichrist. Ferrer's demonizing sermons "displaced the awareness of the internal self towards the hunting of enemies, their identification and their judgement".⁷⁴ This religious reasoning has been identified as one of the main ideological and sociological factors that animated accusations of harmful magic and also governed the motivation of the authorities to purify Christian communities: inquisitorial trials and trails against practitioners of magic were essentially a process of religious purification.⁷⁵ Kathrin Utz Tremp emphasizes Ferrer's description of the Antichrist as the personification of Evil in his sermons and how he described interactions between humans and demons before witch trials even began in Switzerland: "Ferrer perhaps laid the theoretical foundations of what would occupy officials at Fribourg and throughout francophone Switzerland for the 1430s through the rest of the century".⁷⁶

Ferrer's sermons incorporated many of the fundamental demonological elements that would later be used in the fifteenth century to construct the stereotype of the demonic magic, essentially connecting the links between magic (divination and false

⁷⁴ Paravy, "Remarques", p. 153.

⁷⁵ Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 110; Gary K. Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions: Anabaptists and Witches in Reformation Europe, 1525-1600* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2007), p. 123.

⁷⁶ Kathrin Utz Tremp, "Hérétiques ou usuriers? Les Fribourgeois face à saint Vincent Ferrer (début du XVe siècle)", *Mémoire dominicaine*, vol. 7 (1995), p. 124.

miracles), devil worship (work of the devil) and an antichristian conspiracy (followers of the Antichrist/heretics). The combined force of Ferrer's apocalyptic sermons, his warnings against heretics and practitioners of magic as choices that lead to eternal damnation and his conviction that he is on a mission against the Antichrist and the demons who serve him all laid the groundwork for the idea that heretics and sorcerers are part of a demonic conspiracy threatening to bring down Christian societies. Based on the birth of the Antichrist in 1403 and the imminent apocalypse, this timeline also added urgency to acting against the forces of Satan's agents on earth while it was still possible.

Such apocalyptic preaching created an environment favourable to prosecuting sorcerers, which in turn made it possible for those suspected of practicing harmful magic to be accused by their neighbours. Ferrer delivered apocalyptic sermons in the context of the fifteenth century Alps where the Franciscan inquisition was pursuing Waldensian heretics and where prevalent misfortunes were popularly attributed to the harmful magic of vengeful neighbours. By the 1420s, the courts of Dauphiné were associating accused practitioners of magic with devil worship. It was from this perspective that the secular judge Claude Tholosan distinguished demonic magic from heresy in his 1436 anti-satanic treatise *Ut magorum et maleficiorum errores*. His treatise was composed from his personal experience in prosecuting sorcerers from 1426 to 1445. As members of a sect, sorcerers were heretics. But conventional heretics, those who only commit errors on doctrine, retained the faculty of repentance and could hope for the clemency of the judge. Beyond heresy, devil worship also involved idolatry and apostasy, which were irremissible crimes that none could forgive. Tholosan argued that sorcery was not only a religious offence which required abjuration and repentance. It was also a crime that

made the practitioner liable to be prosecuted because sorcerers also harmed members of the community through criminal offences such as infanticide, murder, illness, and the destruction of property. Tholosan asserted his authority over this crime by arguing that sorcerers were subject to secular rather than inquisitorial jurisdiction.

And thus, from the fact that they [heretics] are repentant, that they wish to return to the Church and be corrected spontaneously, it appears that they must not be handed over to the fire or the secular judge, nor be punished by him in other ways, but only be punished by an ecclesiastical judge, either with a prison sentence or another sentence other than natural death.

(...) Those of whom we speak [sorcerers] are not only heretics, but are properly said [to be] decided idolaters, truly and completely, having abandoned the faith, they have deliberately given themselves in body and soul to the devil (...) they must be killed indiscriminately.⁷⁷

There is no doubt that Ferrer's preaching was based on a solid theology, but it is not certain that ordinary people understood it over the firm warnings of protection against the cunning enemy of God. The figure of the devil and of hell that he eloquently presented demonstrates that a mutual acculturation was taking place. For Ferrer to address large crowds, his preaching had to be adapted in order to correspond to the points of reference that resonated with them. A clear and dynamic expression of a doctrine, plainly articulated, was the necessary condition in order to be heard and

⁷⁷"Et ainsi, du fait qu'ils [hérétiques] sont repentants, qu'ils veulent retourner au sein de l'Église et être corrigés spontanément, il apparait qu'ils ne doivent pas être livrés au feu ou au juge séculier, ni être punis par lui d'une autre manière, mais qu'ils doivent être punis seulement par un juge ecclésiastique, soit d'une peine de prison, soit par une peine canonique autre que la mort naturelle. (...) Ceux dont on parle non seulement sont des hérétiques, mais sont à proprement parler des idolâtres décidés, véritables et accomplies, ayant abandonné la foi, ils se sont délibérément donnés corps et âme au diable (...) qui doivent être tués indistinctement": Pierrette Paravy, "Claude Tholosan, *Ut magorum et maleficiorum errores*", in *L'imaginaire du sabbat*, pp. 389-391.

understood. It is clear that for the peasants, there was no true devotion to the Gospel in the sense that religious reformers understood it. What ordinary people internalized from preaching was that sin and guilt applied to all popular forms of magic and superstition. Popular magical rituals continued to be practiced in peasant society, but the guilt and anguish associated with these practices, escalated by apocalyptic sermons, was released at the propitious moment by pointing to those designated as guilty of causing harm through magic and fated to play the role of scapegoat.⁷⁸

2.3 – The Fusion of Heresy and Demonic Magic in Fifteenth-Century Dauphiné

We have seen how Vincent Ferrer’s apocalyptic sermons between 1399 and 1409 impacted exactly the region where the fusion of the Waldensian heresy (*Vauderie*) and demonic magic took place: Piedmont, Lombardy, Savoy and Dauphiné.⁷⁹ The dispersed sources indicate that a minimum of 363 people were accused of harmful magic in Dauphiné in the fifteenth century between 1424 and 1500.⁸⁰ The most intense period of repression was between 1424 and 1445 when 258 people were tried for

⁷⁸ Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, p. 791. See Jacques Le Goff for his mutual acculturation thesis, “Culture cléricale et traditions folkloriques dans la civilisation mérovingienne”, in *Niveaux de culture et groupes sociaux*, (Actes du colloque réuni du 7 au 9 mai 1966, E.N.S.) (Paris: 1967), pp. 21-32; Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Age* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), pp. 223-235.

⁷⁹ Paravy, “Remarques”, pp. 143-155.

⁸⁰ The first trials for demonic magic in the fifteenth century have not been preserved and their accounts are found in the *Quintus Liber Fachureriorum*, the precious register of the Chambre des Comptes containing the records of confiscation of property of the condemned. Archives Départementales de l’Isère, B 4356, 526 folios. The manuscript was presented by J. Chevalier, *Mémoire historique sur les hérésies en Dauphiné avant le XVI^e siècle* (Valence, 1890), p. 31. The anti-satanic guide of Claude Tholosan, *Ut magorum et maleficiorum errors manifesti ignorantibus fiant*, occupies the folios 69 to 80. An edited version of the text is found in Pierrette Paravy, “Claude Tholosan: *Ut magorum et maleficiorum errores...*” in *L’imaginaire du sabbath: Edition critique des textes les plus anciens (1430 c. - 1440 c.)* (Lausanne: Cahiers Lausannois d’histoire médiévale, 1999), pp. 357-438. Other trials in appendix are found in Jean Marx, *L’Inquisition en Dauphiné : Étude sur le développement et la répression de la sorcellerie du XIV^e au début du règne de François I* (Paris: Bibliothèque de l’École des Hautes Études, 1914) and J. Hansen, *Quellen und Unteriuichungen zur geschichte des Hexnwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter*, (Bonn, 1901).

demonic magic. In all, 151 individuals were convicted and sentenced to death.⁸¹ The originality of this specific occurrence is that large-scale trials against practitioners of magic were a new phenomenon, while the chronology indicates that the persecution culminated in the second quarter (1424-1445) of the fifteenth century, at the same moment that the minor regional Briançonnais judge, Claude Tholosan, wrote his anti-satanic guide (*Ut Magorum*, 1436) against demonic magic half a century before the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486). The groundwork for the fusion of demonic magic and Waldensianism was in part prepared by Ferrer. For the prosecution of harmful magic, all the necessary mechanisms were already in place: the collaboration between inquisitors and secular judges, the inevitable chain reaction of accusatory rumours leading to sentencing, the old and odd solitary character of the accused combined with the horrible conditions of the torture and execution. Along with this anti-satanic tendency, comes an essentially religious explanation: the efforts of clerics to fully Christianize the rural population were meant to eliminate superstitious popular beliefs. Ferrer preached sermons denouncing the proliferating sins of a world nearing its end. In the extreme, this campaign has been described as the “crusade of the people of the book against the adherents of the syncretistic tradition of the peasant world”.⁸² Pierrette Paravy, who offers this comment, goes on to make the very necessary qualification that the clerics involved rapidly displayed the limitations of their own emancipation, in the sense that the clergy was supposedly ‘free’ of popular magical beliefs. Historians concur that the “demonizing of both popular religious practices and heresy soon merged into the identification and elimination of witches, a complex mutation with deeply ambiguous

⁸¹ Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, p. 783-784.

⁸² Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, p. 803.

features, which often twisted official agencies into serving popular beliefs rather than destroying them”.⁸³ A transformation occurred turning those who practiced magical rituals into members of a sect devoted to the devil c.1420. With the exception of individual cases of necromancers who invoked demons in elaborate magical rituals, cases involving ordinary people practicing superstitious and magical rituals before the 1420s were not associated with the devil. A few examples of cases involving magical practices before and after 1420 can help to illustrate how the authorities began perceiving the devil as the source behind the abilities and powers that animated the effects of popular magic.

On January 21, 1331, the Delphine court proceeded against Bertrande Escalpine for casting evil spells. Bertrande admitted that she had given talismans to the nephew of her husband so that he could avoid the pain of torture at his own criminal trial. The talismans were in the form of Periwinkle plants, the headgear that her own child wore at his baptism, along with his umbilical cord, all wrapped in pieces of linen.⁸⁴ She had done this because she had often heard that all these things were “good for persons that were imprisoned”.⁸⁵ The authorities appeared to be more concerned with the fact that she had interfered with official criminal proceedings than with the actual magical methods she had used. The reports of pastoral visits by the bishops of Grenoble show that they carefully investigated such abhorrent practices of certain faithful. In 1356, a

⁸³ Briggs, *Witches of Lorraine*, p. 31.

⁸⁴ Carlo Ginzburg describes how the *benandanti* of Friuli who went on spiritual night journeys were identified at birth by having a caul and sometimes the umbilical cord wrapped around their neck, signs they were endowed with the power to perform “night battles”. See *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015), p. 14.

⁸⁵ Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, pp. 775-776.

sorcerer from Myans claimed to heal people by using nuts on which he pronounced certain words. In Chasseley, the same year, Pierre Montellion was reported to be “un sorcier, faiseur d’incantation et devin (a sorcerer, performer of incantations and soothsayer)”. He was able to enter locked rooms at night, to speak with the dead and to predict the future.⁸⁶ These testimonies provide revealing clues concerning the mentality of judges and ordinary people. First, these cases reveal how magical beliefs and practices were widespread among peasant communities. Secondly, they show that both the judicial and religious authorities were aware of their existence and concerned about them. However, at no moment during the interrogation of Bertrande Escalpine in 1331 or during the pastoral visits of the bishops in 1356 was there question of interpreting these practices as proof of a devotion to Satan. In contrast, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, around 1411, a desperate Jeanne Elit went to beg the help of a soothsayer to heal her ill daughter. On her advice, Jeanne lit a candle under the Elder tree and prayed to the saints. But in that moment, it was the devil that she found before her, who appeared in response to her invocation and who was ready to receive her immediate homage and allegiance. Significantly, she only confessed these events in 1441, thirty years after the fact.⁸⁷ These practices were certainly not different from those described above, but the judge now knew, informed by the demonizing notions preached by the clergy, how to recognize the work of Satan through practices that were foreign to dominant orthodoxy and thus defined as criminal.

Something changed in those years to transform those who practiced ordinary healing rituals or simple sorcery into members of a conspiratorial sect devoted to the

⁸⁶ Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, p. 777.

⁸⁷ Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, p. 778.

devil. Two factors can help to explain the transformation. The inquisitorial repression against Waldensian heretics combined with the pastoral efforts of mendicant preachers to eliminate popular magical beliefs produced religious and judicial alliances which merged into the identification and elimination of ‘demonized’ practitioners of magic. Popular misfortunes attributed to harmful magic prompted official judicial procedure which then applied the ‘demonized’ lens of magical practices established by mendicant preachers and inquisitors. The Franciscan inquisition had been established at the end of the thirteenth century and held a jurisdiction that extended throughout most of Dauphiné. Waldensian trials were sustained throughout the fifteenth century, peaking in 1487-1488 in an official military crusade.

Waldensian heresy was demonized largely through its opposition to the Catholic Church. Waldensians were anti-clerical; their leaders claimed to have divine visions and women, traditionally associated with the practice of magic, played an important role in the movement.⁸⁸ In fifteenth-century Dauphiné, Waldensian brethren were expected to cure diseases and they provided clients with recipes and herbs, using prayers that might have been understood as magical spells.⁸⁹ Wolfgang Behringer has argued that above all these reasons, Waldensians were accused of devil worship because of the conspiratorial character of the movement.⁹⁰ The consequence of associating ‘real’ (Waldensian) heretics with the devil constituted one of the foundations on which the persecution of demonic witchcraft could be established. However, Kathrin Utz Tremp

⁸⁸ Wolfgang Behringer, *Detecting the Ultimate Conspiracy, or how Waldensians became Witches*, in Barry Coward and Julian Swann (eds.), *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe: From the Waldensians to the French Revolution* (New York: Ashgate, 2004), p. 20.

⁸⁹ Peter Biller, “Curate infirmos: The Medieval Waldensian Practice of Medicine”, *Studies in Church History*, no. 19 (1982), pp. 55-77.

⁹⁰ Behringer, “Detecting the Ultimate Conspiracy”, p. 21.

has criticized some of Behringer's conclusions. Behringer emphasized the shamanistic and supernaturalistic elements of Waldensian rituals, arguing that the clergy confused Waldensian practices as magical rituals. This confusion would help to explain the synonymous *vaudois* terminology to designate both Waldensians and demonic practitioners of magic.⁹¹ Rather, Utz Tresp argues, Waldensian heresy was characterized by its rejection of Catholic sacraments and the authority of the Church, which were sufficient reasons for Church authorities to associate Waldensians with the devil. Utz Tresp references heresy and trials against practitioners of magic in Dauphiné (1426-1445) and western Switzerland (1399-1442) where the authorities made clear and conscious distinctions between Waldensian heretics and devil-worshipping sorcerers. In Dauphiné, Waldensians were pursued by inquisitors while practitioners of harmful magic were tried by secular courts. In Switzerland, there existed only a single inquisitorial jurisdiction based in Lausanne that alternated between the persecution of 'real' heretics and then sorcerers.⁹² "This competition between the inquisition and secular courts thus further fanned the flames of the witch hunts".⁹³

For Utz Tresp, the level at which the fundamental fusion between heresy and witchcraft occurred was in their common demonic causation. Heresy and demonic magic both became separate variations of demonic corruption, but each a part of an inclusive demonic conspiracy. The patterns of persecution show that the authorities, inquisitors and secular judges, made clear distinctions between Waldensian heretics and demonic practitioners of magic: "Surviving trial records from 1448 [Vevey] mention

⁹¹ Behringer, "Detecting the Ultimate Conspiracy", p. 19.

⁹² Utz Tresp, "The Heresy of Witchcraft", p. 3.

⁹³ Utz Tresp, "The Heresy of Witchcraft", p. 6.

“heresy” and “heretics” throughout (*causa heresies, synagoge hereticorum, crimen heresies*), although when one notes the imaginary ‘crimes’ of which the accused was eventually convicted, they were clearly witches. If witches continued to be called “heretics”, it was because with this description the inquisition asserted jurisdiction over them”.⁹⁴

In Dauphiné, the judgements rendered between 1424 and 1445 summarized the content of the confessions, which corresponded to the judge’s conception of demonic magic. Practitioners of magic who worship the devil were defined as members of a demonic cult, presupposing a faith and practices which were radically antithetical to Christianity. Emphasis was placed on the renunciation of God in favour of Satan. During the interrogation, leading questions were asked of the suspects in a strict order concerning their initiation, who had initiated them, their dealings with the devil, and the rituals they performed to demonstrate to the devil that they had renounced God, such as turning over a sacred object and pronouncing certain words: “I renounce you Babylon!” In certain trials, the location of the sabbath, called “fach” or “synagoge” was specified: under a tree past the Recluse, then confirmed by other witnesses.⁹⁵

The condemnation of Jubert of Bavaria shows how elements of necromancy (invoking demons) became associated with popular magical practices. Jubert was condemned to burn November 28, 1437, following a trial for harmful magic which lasted seventeen days. He was sixty years old and had travelled to Briançon to work as a tanner. He had inopportunely boasted that he had caused Jean Fabri’s blindness by painting Fabri’s image with two keys, signifying the permanent closure of his eyes.

⁹⁴ Utz Tremp, “The Heresy of Witchcraft”, p. 6.

⁹⁵ Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, p. 848.

When Jeannette, the widow of Jean Payan, saw herself represented in a similar painting, she reported Jubert to the authorities. Jubert's confession consisted of a mixture of his traveling experiences in Munich and Vienna and satanic fantasies that were probably prompted by torture and the judge's leading questions. It was ten years ago, when he was in the service of a priest in Munich that his master initiated him into the demonic arts. The priest opened a book of necromancy and three demons appeared. One demon called Luxure (Luxury) appeared in the form of a twelve-year-old girl, with whom Jubert maintained a sexual relationship at night. The demon Superbe (Vanity), was a middle-aged man dressed all in black, that Jubert would 'adore' at dawn. The demon Avare (Greed), dressed in rags and carrying a purse full of money, would come to Jubert at six o'clock in the evenings. The three demons accompanied him every day according to the time of day. The ritual of renouncing God was constantly demanded from Jubert. He would collect herbs on the night of Saint John's feast day. He participated at the secret demonic gatherings and murdered children in their cribs to make demonic powders out of them. These elements of the crime are consistent with the authorities' conception of satanic magic in Dauphiné. Jubert and his priest master had been able magically to build a bridge in a single night. In Vienna, Jubert called on the help of his demon companions and caused the death by drowning of three drunks who had refused to share their drinks with him. One was thrown into a well, another into the latrine of a Dominican convent and the third into the latrine of a Franciscan convent, where they were discovered the next day. Jubert was assaulted by robbers in a forest, but was rescued by an army of demons disguised as soldiers. Finally, he added that the great number of invokers of demons caused the world to be full of sin, wars and divisions, a

statement which made an explicit connection between devil worship and the practice of magic.⁹⁶

Jubert was thus initiated into a satanic cult by a necromancer priest. He confessed to the standard elements of the crime concerning the renunciation of God, the participation at the satanic gatherings, sexual unions with demons and the murder of babies. These features correspond to Tholosan's description of satanic magic and the rituals of their sect.⁹⁷ The mention, almost in passing, of the drunks murdered in the well and the latrines of mendicant friars reveals how popular imagination perceived these preachers as having a central role in the battle against the devil. The triple satanic image of the demons representing the sins of Luxury, Vanity and Greed echoes the types of themes preached in mendicant sermons.

The attempts at convincing ordinary people of the demonic nature of Waldensian heretics were probably less successful, because people were often less enthusiastic to hunt them over practitioners of harmful magic, while the demonizing rhetoric of the clergy certainly validated the beliefs and fears of ordinary people concerning harmful magic. Accusations of harmful magic reveal the prevalent misfortunes and concerns in village life. In 1449, Heriette del Bosco was accused of harmful magic by at least twenty-nine people in a community that counted fifty-three homes. She was held responsible for two economic 'ruins', the death of eight of her neighbours' cattle, the

⁹⁶ See Jubert of Bavaria's confession: "The crimes and sentence of Jubert of Bavaria, tried for witchcraft, 1437", in P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Witch Beliefs and Witch Trials in the Middle Ages: Documents and Readings* (New York: Continuum, 2011), pp. 189-194 and Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, p. 815.

⁹⁷ See Tholosan, "Ut Magorum" in *L'imaginaire du sabbat*: "On the instigation of their master, those who enter this sect in this way renounce God"; "They give their children to the devil, usually their first born that they burn and offer them kneeling in sacrifice, holding the child naked under his arms, then kill them (...) they make powders out of them", p. 365.

death of three people in addition to her own children which she had offered to the devil and she had also apparently caused the illnesses of fifteen people.⁹⁸ Dauphiné's practitioners of harmful magic were often prosecuted enthusiastically by their neighbours, even in the 1420s. In 1428, two women arrested in a remote valley were taken to prison on mules, escorted by four men on horseback and five on foot. When they were returned to be executed, only five men were paid to escort them, because the villagers themselves provided ten additional volunteers.⁹⁹

The imposition of normative forms of religious behaviours and beliefs was directly linked to the forces of religious activism and reform. Its repressive component, the inquisition, is evidently its most visible and identifiable aspect, but not necessarily the most important one. One of the most difficult obstacles confronting historians of popular religion is establishing the relationship between ideas articulated by preachers and those held by their audience. Gerald Strauss has pointed out the potential disparity between what the clergy preach and what the audience understood.¹⁰⁰ Mack P. Holt has stated that the question of how people received the religious message conveyed in sermons has not been resolved.¹⁰¹ One of the major causes of this uncertainty is obvious: the majority of the evidence concerning lay religiosity originates from clerical sources rather than lay sources, and they mostly inform us about religious behaviour rather than belief. The epistemological danger is to see two opposing modes of understanding in late medieval culture: the first would be profound and visceral, concerning magic; the

⁹⁸ Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, p. 839.

⁹⁹ Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, p. 805.

¹⁰⁰ Gerald Strauss, "Success and Failure in the German Reformation", *Past & Present*, no. 67 (May, 1975), p. 51.

¹⁰¹ Mack P. Holt, "The Social History of the Reformation: Recent Trends and Future Agendas", *Journal of Social History*, vol. 37, no. 1 (autumn 2003), p. 140.

second would be imposed and superficial, concerning Christian discourse whose sense would not be perceived or retained except for its compulsory customs and its miraculous aspects conforming to the peasants' (non-Christian/pagan/magical) conception of the universe inherited from their pre-Christian past and traditions. Adopting this point of view would be equivalent to embracing the position of the judge. Rather, the historian must conclude that there existed two related and intertwined levels within the popular consciousness. Preternatural beliefs, magical practices and adhesion to Christian salvation were blended together at the same existential depth.¹⁰²

The impact of Ferrer's preaching on the audience concerning the demonization of heretics and practitioners of magic as being part of an anti-Christian conspiracy reinforces several historical interpretations concerning the creation of the witches' sabbath. The idea that devil worshippers constituted a new kind of heretical sect was constructed from the combination of clerical perceptions concerning religious deviance and popular religious practices. The association of heresy and magic with the devil was transmitted through Ferrer's apocalyptic sermons, emphasizing that these were signs of the coming of the Antichrist. Ferrer certainly perceived the work of the devil behind both heresy and the popular magical practices of peasants.

2.4 – Satanic Rituals and the Reality of the Sacramental System

Participation at the secret satanic gatherings was the defining feature of devil-worship and the crucial element in the crime of treason against God. Devoted to an anti-church, devil-worshippers dedicated themselves to an anti-Christian cult, whose rituals

¹⁰² Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 8.

and practices were defined early in the fifteenth century. After apostasy and homage to the devil, his followers performed night flying to reach the night gathering where profane rituals were performed, including orgies, unnatural sexual unions with demons and other witches, and the cannibalism of children and newborns. Demonological theories promoting the reality of a satanic sect made extensive references to the sexual component of devil worship. When an accused confessed to having sex with the devil, this signified that he or she had made a pact with him. In his monograph *Demon Lovers*, Walter Stephens explains the concerns of demonologists who encouraged the prosecution of witchcraft from a desire and anxiety to prove the existence and the reality of the spiritual world and thus validate Christian doctrines. Stephens reasons that at the end of the Middle Ages and during the early modern period, if the demonologists demonstrated a sexual obsession over the copulation between witches and demons, it was because of their need to confirm the existence of demons and, by extension, the existence of the spiritual world. There was an emphasis on the physical/sexual interactions between humans and demons and an effort to describe demons in material terms. This explanation reveals the internal logic of clergymen committed to exposing a conspiratorial network of demonic witches, and it explains the ultimate meaning in the motivations and intentions that animated the demonologists' approach when they wrote treatises on the "science of demons". The inverted nature of satanic rituals and the demonic attacks against the sacraments of the Church, such as the desecration of the Eucharist and curses that caused the sterility of married couples, confirmed the efficacy of the doctrine of transubstantiation, the sanctity of marriage and all the sacraments.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 17.

However, Stephens establishes this premise to support his main argument: demonologists developed their demonological theories while being at odds with their own skepticism about the reality of demons and trying above all to convince themselves of this reality. According to Stephens, the real “demon lovers” were the demonologists themselves. “The attitude of witchcraft theorists towards their theories was not belief but rather *resistance to skepticism*, a desperate attempt to maintain belief, and it betrays an uncommonly desperate *need to believe*”.¹⁰⁴ Stephens' effort to understand witchcraft should not be underestimated. He surveyed a large number of treatises on witchcraft published between 1400 and 1700. He also paid close attention to the questions concerning the material existence of demons answered in theological and demonological treatises, noting that most of them report on sexual relations with demons. How can we explain this? Were demonologists themselves sexually repressed, whose personal frustrations would explain their determination to give such a dark image of women? According to Stephens, that is not where the frustration is located, because nothing in the writings confirms this reading. The reason is found elsewhere in the *Malleus Maleficarum* where there is discussion of women accused of witchcraft under torture who are described as “expert witnesses to the reality of demons because they have sex with them”.¹⁰⁵ Demonologists were thus attempting to align their evidence concerning the ‘reality’ of the demons. It was necessary to invalidate the skeptical arguments, and also to try to convince themselves. So how can we understand a cycle of cruelty and violence on the scale of many centuries? The inquisition and the witch hunt would find their meaning, according to Stephens, in a crisis of faith that had reached a breaking

¹⁰⁴ Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁵ Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, p. 43.

point. Why, then, were the works following the example of the *Malleus* multiplying, that its authors agreed on the torture and the execution of tens of thousands of people who would not really be guilty? The mission behind this crisis of faith was to make witches a tangible reality. If witches were not fictional, it unquestionably and absolutely proved the existence of demons and, by counter argument, the existence and presence of a vigilant God. Stephens emphasizes how educated men who explored the sexual aspect of witchcraft were anguished by their own doubts.¹⁰⁶

The existence of a sect of practitioners of magic who conspired with demons was recognized as a newly discovered phenomenon by its detractors, as defined in the demonologies of the fifteenth century by the likes of Tholosan. Ancient and traditional magical practices were reinterpreted by inquisitors and secular judges “from a new point of view, more attentive, toward the world that surrounded them” in order to allow them to “destroy all deviation”.¹⁰⁷ Theologians, inquisitors and jurists who argued for the existence of this new ‘reality’ were confronted with the traditional point of view that associated the effects of magical rituals with fraud, illusion, deception and natural causation.¹⁰⁸ The demonization of these practices led to the conclusion their effects relied on demonic agency. The canon *Episcopi* of the tenth century represented an important theological obstacle for thinkers who sought to establish the reality of satanic witchcraft. According to the canon *Episcopi*, night flying and the participation of women at nocturnal gatherings were imaginary and those who considered them real

¹⁰⁶ Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁷ Parravy, “A propos de la genèse médiévale des chasses aux sorcières”, p. 350.

¹⁰⁸ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 186.

were deceived by the devil.¹⁰⁹ Skeptical members of the clergy and jurists would condemn the practice of magic but pointed to the authority of the canon *Episcopi* to discredit the reality of secret satanic gatherings. If by the fourteenth century a skeptical position remained, the “realist” movement established itself and over time pushed its beliefs to the point of becoming hegemonic. At a basic level of interpretation, the “realist” movement affirmed the material fact and thus the reality of satanic magic. By the middle of the fifteenth century, in learned thought, the “dream” state of the sabbath, clearly established in the canon *Episcopi*, sometimes remained, but with the essential difference that the accused were viewed as heretical and willing participants in the satanic rituals, guaranteeing their guilt.

The debate over the nature of the sabbath is raised through two types of historical interpretations. According to Norman Cohn and Richard Kieckhefer’s perspective, the sabbath reflects the learned culture of the clergy and the judges. Through his patient examination of sources, Cohn insists on four elements in the elaboration of the stereotype of demonic witchcraft that he defines (apostasy, devil worship, sabbath and *maleficia*) as creations from the minds of the judges and the clergy.¹¹⁰ Richard Kieckhefer included the witches’ sabbath under ‘diabolism’ since he could not find any trace of it in the witness depositions before the fifteenth century. As far as he could see, stories “about women who went on mysterious nightly rides... with

¹⁰⁹ The *Canon Episcopi* from the tenth century: “It is also not to be admitted that some wicked women, perverted by the Devil, seduced by illusions and phantasms of demons, believe and profess themselves, in the hours of night, to ride upon certain beasts with Diana, the goddess of pagans, and an innumerable multitude of women, and in the silence of the dead of night to traverse great spaces of earth, and to obey her commands as of her mistress, and to be summoned to her service on certain nights”. See Brian Levack, *The Witchcraft Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 34.

¹¹⁰ N. Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), pp. 99-102.

some mysterious goddess” stood apart from witchcraft.¹¹¹ In his analysis, there was no evidence, at least not before 1500 or so, that the two ever mingled at the village level: “there is no assurance that the stories narrated in such literature had popular origins, or that they did in fact take hold on the popular imagination”.¹¹² Carlo Ginzburg, on the contrary, insists on the idea of a “cultural formation of compromise” that should not be reduced to the speculations of the elite.¹¹³ A subtle exchange operated between the learned culture and the beliefs tied to popular culture through which the sabbath was created. Ginzburg’s investigation in exceptional cases made it possible for him to perceive the outcrop of the deep layers of a culture inherited from Celtic and shamanistic traditions, the Benandanti of Friuli in particular who went night flying to perform fertility rituals. This convinced him to see that the judges would have perceived and structured in their own language a reality foreign to them, however solid and exuberant that reality was as expressed by its practitioners.

Undoubtedly, Cohn’s explanation continues to be proven true.¹¹⁴ In *Europe’s Inner Demons*, Cohn shows how the demonization of heretics in the late Middle Ages was grafted onto popular magical practices. The fear of a demonic conspiracy combined with the crime of *maleficia* (harmful magic) merged into the concept of a satanic cult whose members practiced harmful magic. The fusion occurred mainly in inquisition

¹¹¹ Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundation in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), p. 40. See also Kieckhefer’s “Avenging the Blood of Children: anxieties over child victims and the origins of the European witch trials”, in Alberto Ferreiro (ed.) *The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey B. Russell*, (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 91-118.

¹¹² Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*, p. 27.

¹¹³ Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) and “Les origines du sabbat”, in Nicole Jacques-Chaquin, Nicole Jacques-Lefèvre, Maxime Préaud (eds.), *Le Sabbat des sorciers en Europe (XVe-XVIIIe siècles): colloque international E.N.S. Fontenay Saint-Cloud (4-7 novembre 1992)* (Grenoble: Éditions Jérôme Millon, 1993), p. 17.

¹¹⁴ Hutton, *The Witch*, p. 178.

trials where confessions of harmful magic were interpreted as proof of devil worship. “The significance seemed all the more sinister because the inquisitorial procedure, under which heresy trials were conducted, was as likely to distort the facts as to elicit them; and could also be used to fabricate deeds that were never done at all”.¹¹⁵

The formulation of satanic magic in secular trials that adapted the inquisitorial methods of investigation produced similar results. Secular judges were more interested in punishing the guilty and handing out justice to convicted criminals as opposed to inquisitors and preachers who were more concerned with the conversion of heretics, the abjuration of sin and convincing the guilty to repent for their crimes.¹¹⁶

Ultimately, the ‘reality’ of satanic heresy and sorcery depended on the indisputable religious ‘reality’ of Christian theology. Adversity and hardship were defined as divine tests of salvation. God allowed evil to exist in order to test the worthiness of Christians. The story of Job provided biblical support for this assertion and Job’s perfect moral attitude in the face of unimaginable torment provided “a role model for victims of *maleficium*”.¹¹⁷ The devil, as the personification of evil, was portrayed by preachers as the source of misery and suffering in the world. The demonizing discourse found in fifteenth-century mendicant sermons allowed ordinary people to project their material and spiritual anxieties onto individuals ‘corrupted’ by the devil and find a sense of moral and religious vindication when a suspect of harmful magic was found guilty of being the source of all their suffering. This can be compared to the way that witchcraft theorists alleviated their doubts over the ‘reality’ of the

¹¹⁵ Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons*, p. 117.

¹¹⁶ Jennifer Kolpacoff Deane, *A History of Medieval Heresy and Inquisition* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), p. 103.

¹¹⁷ Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 445.

spiritual world by confirming the existence of demons. Ordinary people could confirm that their suffering was not a divine consequence of their religious and moral failings if demonic heretics were the 'real' cause.

Preaching was the most efficient means for religious reformers to reach the greatest number of people in order to prevent demonic corruption and religious deviance. The *exempla* found in fifteenth-century demonological literature and sermons written by clergymen, often Dominican preachers, relating to demonic conspiracies, had preventative intentions. The stories of demonic heretics and sorcerers related in sermons were powerful tools in the hands of experienced theologians such as Vincent Ferrer who framed the struggle against heresy and the devil in apocalyptic terms.

The next chapter will examine the link between sermons, trials against devil-worshippers and works of demonology. A kind of triple feedback loop was established in the fifteenth century between sermons denouncing demonic heretics and witches, the content of confessions extracted from accused practitioners of magic under torture and the theological and demonological notions developed in learned treatises calling for the extermination of satanic practitioners of magic, each one feeding and validating the other.

Chapter 3 - Preaching against the Devil in the Fifteenth Century: A Feedback Effect

As discussed in chapter 2, the origins of a conspiracy of demonic sorcerers were developed in conjunction with the demonizing discourse found in mendicant sermons, trials against harmful magic and works of demonology. This new 'reality' was articulated and transmitted to ordinary people through sermons that described both heresy and magical practices as the work of the devil. The description of the activities of practitioners of harmful magic who serve the devil began to overlap in sermons, in confessions extracted during trials and in works promoting demonological theories. The Franciscan preacher Bernardino of Siena's description of the magical practices of women in 1420s Italy echoes the confession of an accused woman in an account of sorcery trials that occurred in Berne, Switzerland, an account used by the Dominican Johannes Nider to compose his *Formicarius*. Such accounts were then used as *exempla* for preachers to instruct the faithful about satanic practices and to convince the authorities of the existence of this underground threat.

The political dispute over conciliarism certainly seems to have played a role in the development of this theory. The Council of Basel was convened to implement the conciliarist agenda, to transform the Church's organization and its structure of authority, and demonological theory was clearly discussed there. The preacher Guillaume Adeline, an anti-conciliarist and an opponent of witch hunting, who allegedly preached that the secret demonic gatherings were a delusion, was himself accused of devil worship in 1453. This chapter further develops the premise established in chapter 2 by arguing that the demonizing discourse found in mendicant sermons created a feedback effect

between how preachers represented practitioners of magic as followers of Satan, the content found in confessions of those accused and how these accounts were then used to formulate sophisticated theological and demonological theories in works of demonology.

3.1 – Bernardino of Siena’s Demonizing Sermons

One of the best examples in the development of the stereotype of the demon worshipping witch in the fifteenth century can be found in the sermons of Bernardino of Siena. By examining what the audiences were taught to believe about demonic magic, Franco Mormando’s analysis of this preacher shows how Bernardino’s sermons strived to adapt magical practices to the satanic notions of the clergy. In *The Preacher’s Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* published in 1999, Mormando analyzes some of the most important pages in Bernardino’s surviving corpus of sermons which summarize his involvement in trials against a practitioner magic in Rome, Siena and elsewhere in the first half of the fifteenth century.¹ This Franciscan friar’s public instruction also represented an important stage in the transformation of the collective popular beliefs concerning superstition, sorcery, magical rituals and demonology into the evil devil-worshipping and conspiratorial witch who attended satanic gatherings in remote parts of the countryside.² Bernardino’s rhetoric also built on the Dominican preacher Vincent

¹ The witch trial discussed in Mormando’s article is found in Bernardino of Siena, *Prediche volagari sul Campo di Siena*, (Firenze 1427), Carlo Delcorno (ed.), 2 vols. (Milan: Rusconi, 1989); and Franco Mormando, “Bernardino of Siena, Popular Preacher and Witch-Hunter: A 1426 Witch Trial in Rome”, in William G. McDonald (ed.), *Fifteenth Century Studies* (Columbia: Camden House, 1998), pp. 84-119, seep. 97.

²Mormando, “Bernardino of Siena, Popular Preacher and Witch-Hunter”, pp. 84-119; *The Preacher’s Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Ferrer's demonizing themes in his sermons. He used the fear of harmful magic to emphasize the demonic nature of practitioners of magic.

Mormando's exhaustive study of Bernardino's sermons on sorcery, sodomy and Judaism/usury, which he delivered with mixed results on many occasions, provides a rounded picture of the preacher's concerns about sins that particularly threatened to bring down the wrath of God on entire societies. Following a literary analysis describing the Franciscan and scholastic values that informed Bernardino's homiletics, Mormando extracts their social content. In an age of insecurity, Bernardino's rhetoric gave voice to his audiences' fears and strongly encouraged the persecution of nonconformist groups in northern and central Italy. Mormando argues that Bernardino helped to demonize the image of the practitioners of magic by playing on conventional popular beliefs and by relating them to the demonic activities of heretics in the mind of his audience.

In a series of sermons pronounced in Florence (1424-1425) and Siena (1425 and 1427), Bernardino defined practitioners of magic as women who represent anti-models of social, moral and spiritual life.³ Both elite and popular stereotypes show that many of these beliefs were already in circulation well before the dawn of the European witch hunts in the early modern period. Bernardino's sermons show that he preached the existence of 'real' witches who worship the devil but limited their powers to an illusory effect, although this still guaranteed their guilt. In this sense, Bernardino remained loyal to the Augustinian conception of demonic power and agency as framed in the canon *Episcopi* of the tenth century, which limited demonic power to the ability to act on the psyche and to produce illusions and false dreams. The effects of curses are real because

³ Bernardino of Siena, *Saint Bernardine of Siena: Sermons*, Selected and edited by Don Nazareno Orlandi, translated by Helen Josephine Robins (Tipografia: Siena, 1920).

it was really the devil who performs the intended deeds, not because of the rituals performed by deluded women tricked by the devil.⁴

Between March 8 and May 3, 1427, Bernardino delivered a series of sermons in an attempt to instigate a witch-hunt in his hometown of Siena by recounting a witch trial that was brought about, according to him, by his preaching in Rome in 1426. In the account, the audience had been reluctant to accept his ideas and thought that he was “dreaming it all up”. However, when Bernardino applied a fear tactic on them by proclaiming that anyone who failed to report someone who practiced magic was guilty of the same sin, “one hundred accusers came forward”.⁵ He then presented the diabolical activities of one particular witch to explain to the audience that it is really the devil who performs the offences: the motifs were infanticide by blood-sucking and the preparation of powder from infant cadavers, the suggestion that the demonic pact had been signed in order to gain some advantage on her enemies, and her rituals which involved going to St. Peter’s Square with jars of ointments made of plants gathered on the feast of St.-John the Baptist and the Assumption.⁶ Bernardino described to the audience that the devil would arrive at the home of his victims disguised as a cat and would somehow trick or take possession of the witch who then visited innocent children and sucked their blood.

Giving the example of a mirror, a popular tool in the occult arts, he explained the

⁴ Mormando, “Bernardino of Siena, Popular Preacher and Witch-Hunter”, p. 89.

⁵ Mormando, “Bernardino of Siena, Popular Preacher and Witch-Hunter”, p. 85

⁶“And among all of these women, there was one woman arrested who said and confessed without torture that she had killed at least thirty young babies by sucking their blood; and she also said that she had freed sixty of them; and she said that every time she freed one of them, she had to offer a limb up to the devil, and she would use the limb of some animal; and this is how she operated for a long time. And what’s more, she confessed that she had killed her own son and had made powder out of his body and used to give this powder to be eaten in her various activities.”; “And she told of the way she used to go before daybreak to St.-Peter’s Square, and she would have with her certain little jars of ointment made out of plants that had been gathered on the feat of St.-John the Baptist and on the Assumption.” In Franco Mornando, “Bernardino of Siena, Popular Preacher and Witch-Hunter”, pp. 87-88.

susceptibility of the human mind to optical illusion to illustrate the power of the devil to delude these women.

Mormando cross-referenced Bernardino's account in three contemporary non-Italian sources describing this Roman case which contained the unique details concerning the woman's services as a healer and the transformation of the witch into a cat, the better to "poison with evil spells children lying in their cribs; afterwards, transforming herself back into human shape, she would cure them, collecting a fee [for her medical services]."⁷ The preacher concluded his account with a brief description of the fiery end of this woman. She was "condemned to the stake and burned so that nothing was left but her ashes". Another woman accused of practicing magic went to the stake without being strangled to death before being burned, a gruesome specification intended to instill the fear of God in Bernardino's audience.⁸ By the end of the account, Mormando concluded that almost "all the classic components of the witch scenario that had been slowly coalescing in the collective imagination over the centuries as a mass of disparate folklore beliefs metamorphosed into the complex drama of diabolical witchcraft."⁹ The culprits are old women who made a pact with Satan and do his bidding, which includes kidnapping, blood-sucking, infanticide and knowledge of secret herbal potions and creams that they use for their *maleficia*. Women who conclude a pact with the devil are lustful creatures, corresponding to the nature of the animals into which

⁷ Mormando, *Preacher's Demons*, pp. 63-65 cite: Felix Hemmerlin, *De nobilitate et Rusciate dialogus*, (Strassburg, 1490), chapter II, fol. vii, v,ix; Johann Hartlieb, *Buch aller verbotenen Kunst*, Dora Ulm (ed.) (Halle an der Saale, 1914) written in 1456; Johann Chraft, "*praedicatore Cambensi*", of the *Chronica pontificum et imperatorum romanorum* of the Augustinian chronicler, Andreas of Gegensburg (Andrea Ratisbonensis, ca. 1380-ca.1438).

⁸ Mormando, "Bernardino of Siena", p. 92.

⁹ Mormando, "Bernardino of Siena", p. 93.

they believe they transform and are thus qualified as ‘bestial’. Their transformation into cats was truly worked through the power of illusion of the devil. Bernardino tested the audience’s religious integrity by questioning their faith and their allegiance to God.

Are there here perchance as well even some of those cursed ones who are in league with the devil? Finally, these [unguents] came into my hands, and when I put them to my nose, they stank with so foul a stench that they seemed in truth to be of the devil, as they were. And they said that with these they anointed themselves, and when they were anointed in this way they seemed to be cats, and it was not so, for their bodies did not change into another form, but it seemed to them that they did. At length she was condemned to be burned at the stake, and was burned, so that nothing of her remained but her ashes.¹⁰

Moreover, the notion of satanic gatherings or the witch’s sabbath had yet not been fully concretized in Bernardino’s sermons, despite the description in one of Bernardino’s sermons of a group of men and women dancing at night in an open field, that the preacher calls “a sight filled with fear”. This picture of “a crowd of people dancing in an open field” lacked many of the supernatural or diabolical elements of the complete concept of the witch’s sabbath. There was no mention of the devil or satanic rituals. However, Mormando asserts that this story would have raised the suspicions of contemporary audiences. The elements of popular culture would have led the audience to interpret the gathering and dancing in an open field as ancient magical and pagan rites. The account of the nocturnal gathering is related through a cardinal who happened upon the event. The cardinal discovered that one of the attendees was a young girl from “Slavonia”, or the Balkans. That region was thought to be the home of the heretical Bogomils.¹¹ Following this account, Bernardino called for the extermination of any

¹⁰ Bernardino, *Sermons*, p. 167.

¹¹ Bogomilism was a dualistic sect that originated in the tenth century and might have been a precursor to Catharism. The Bogomils were a Gnostic sect founded in the First Bulgarian Empire during the tenth

“enchantress or sorceress, or enchanters or witches”.¹² This, combined with the fear of heretical sects – Bogomils, Cathars, Waldensians, Nicolaitans – that met secretly at night would likely imply the presence of sorcery, diabolism and harmful magic to many contemporaries.¹³ The clergy were preoccupied with heretical sects and feared their corrupting presence. Ordinary people were more concerned with the potential harm practitioners of magic could inflict within communities. The clergy used the names of heretical groups that had long gone out of existence, such as the Nicolaitans, that ordinary lay people would not have known, adding further mystery to their descriptions. Bernardino’s sermons strategically strengthened the fears of ordinary people by associating the activities at nocturnal gatherings with the activities of demonic sorcerers.

century by the priest Bogomil as an oppositional politico-religious movement to the Bulgarian state and the Church. Bogomilism was a notorious heretical sect of the earlier Middle ages who strongly influenced the Cathars of southern France, the Rhineland and Lombardy. See Gustave Welter, *Histoire des sectes chrétiennes* (Paris: Payots, 2011). p. 91. For Bernardino’s exploitation of the popular fears of heretics, see Mormando, *The Preacher’s Demons*, p. 68.

¹² Mormando, “Bernardino of Siena, Popular Preacher and Witch-Hunter”, p. 94.

¹³ For the association of the Bogomils with the Balkans, see Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 76-77. The Cathars were an anti-clerical sect who rejected and denied the sacraments of the Church, the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Virgin Mary was Christ’s mother and the future resurrection of human body; see Michel Roquebert, *L’Épopée cathare, la fin des amis de Dieu (1244-1321) vol. V* (Paris: Éditions Perrin, 2007) (*Les cathares, de la chute de Montségur aux derniers bûchers* for the 1998 edition). Italy and Languedoc were the regions where Catharism was the most strongly established in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; see Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002, 3rd ed.), pp. 115-157. For the influence of Bogomilism on the Cathars; see Edward Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), pp. 108-117. Nicolaitans were heretics in the first century A.D. They are mentioned for the first time in the Book of Revelations (2:1-7; 12-17) in the New Testament, and then in later Christian literature, where they are said to have been followers of Nicolaus of Antioch, a deacon in Jerusalem in the same period, but this may be incorrect. They appear to have gone out of existence by 200 A.D. See Arland J. Hultgren and Steven A. Haggmark (eds.), *The Earliest Christian Heretics: Readings from their Opponents* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), pp. 28-31. For the link between the Waldensian heresy and witchcraft; see Wolfgang Behringer, “Detecting the Ultimate Conspiracy, or how Waldensians became Witches”, in *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe: From the Waldensians to the French Revolution*, in Barry Coward and Julian Swan (eds.), (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 13-34. All these heretics were still thought to be living in northern Italy, as Bernardino himself teaches; see Mormando, “Bernardino of Siena, Popular Preacher and Witch-Hunter”, p. 95 and *The Preacher’s Demons*, p. 68.

Bernardino's discourse created a narrative wherein the activities of heretics were being fused with the fear of harmful magic.

As far as gender is concerned, Bernardino first said of accused sorcerers that "a great quantity of men and women were accused", and later stated that the group was reduced to consist of "those women who had committed the worst crimes". He reported to the audience that both men and women were involved in such activities, but that only women ended up being implicated as the worst of the practitioners. According to Mormando, the preponderance of women among the suspects "squares with what we read in the rest of Bernardino's preaching on the subject and confirms what we encounter in studies of the witch craze in the rest of Europe across the centuries".¹⁴

The "one hundred accusations" filed with the inquisitor after Bernardino's preaching in Rome suggested that the audience was immediately persuaded by his anti-witchcraft rhetoric. There were in fact only two executions for sorcery in Rome in 1426, and as far as the preacher's success elsewhere, there are two other examples.¹⁵ In 1428, in the town of Todi, the concrete results of that preaching mission opened the townspeople's eye to the grave "evil" and "danger" a certain woman represented, a woman who apparently had been peacefully tolerated until that point, and had been actively patronized as a soothsayer by her neighbours and other clients, the well-known case of Matteuccia de Francesco. Bernardino called her "the enemy of mankind" and

¹⁴ Mormando, "Bernardino of Siena", p. 87.

¹⁵ "Wherefore it happened that after this admonition which I gave in Rome, according to what the inquisitor of our order relates, a few days later no less than one hundred accusers came forward. Wherefore a consultation was held with Pope Martin who ordered these women be arrested and many witches were thus arrested, among whom there were three women who were the worst cases, one of whom confessed of her own accord that she had killed thirty little babies and had set sixty free". In *Prediche volgari sul Campo di Siena 1427*, cited in Mormando, "Bernardino of Siena, Popular Preacher and Witch-Hunter", pp. 103-104.

explained that it was her own clients who denounced her after hearing his sermons”.¹⁶ Bernardino based the truth of his account on the fact that the woman had confessed freely to all of these deeds “without torture,” implying that her confession was the spontaneous truth and not the desperate attempt of someone trying to escape the pain of torture. However, her “voluntary confession” was probably made after she had first confessed to witchcraft while being tortured.¹⁷ In 1427 however, in his hometown of Siena, Bernardino’s sermons against practitioners of magic ironically fell on deaf ears causing no accusations of witchcraft. In any case, Bernardino succeeded in Rome and Todi not only in sending to the stake for the crime of diabolical sorcery women who may have been merely guilty of simple sorcery, but also in intensifying the general climate of fear and suspicion which affected cities and town in Italy concerning the figure of the demonic witch. This impact is demonstrated by the actions of the town council of Todi who modified the city statues by adopting a series of penal code reforms specifically proposed by Bernardino making the practice of demonic magic a crime with even more severe penalties.¹⁸

Such accusations were therefore due to fears of heretical groups. Heresy was a major preoccupation of Bernardino’s and of many members of the Christian hierarchy in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance.¹⁹ Bernardino himself had been summoned to Rome in 1426 by Pope Martin V to stand trial for heresy, a charge derived from his

¹⁶ Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons*, p. 72.

¹⁷ Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons*, p. 72.

¹⁸ Mormando, “Bernardino of Siena”, p. 97.

¹⁹ This was an era of plague, war, famine, apocalyptic anxiety, the Avignon papacy, the Wycliffe reform protest and the Hussite wars, the uprising of the Jacquerie in France, the Ciompi in Italy and the Lollards in England, and other instances of popular revolts against established authority, especially ecclesiastical, as pointed out by Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons*, p. 77.

propagation of the “novel” cult of the Holy Name of Jesus with its public veneration of the monogram *IHS*. This practice was strongly condemned by some elites within the Church as a form of idolatry. At the end of a long sermon concerning the name of Jesus Christ, lasting two or three hours, Bernardino would present a sunburst monogram tablet of *IHS* to the audience and burst into tears, screaming uncontrollably. This theatrical and emotional display was repeated several times which alarmed other members of the clergy. Bernardino was charged with idolatry, magic and heresy. Before he left for Rome, Bernardino preached in the town of Viterbo that “I am going to Rome to be cremated by fire and you, enjoying peace and tranquility, will remain behind. They are calling me a heretic and the word circulating in Rome is that I must be burned at the stake”.²⁰ He was acquitted of the formal charges of heresy after a lengthy investigation by high ranking members of the Church, even though suspicions against him lingered. He was formally exonerated by Pope Eugenius IV in 1432. However, it was only after he was accused of idolatry and heresy that Bernardino began preaching against demonic magic. In his letter of exhortation, *Sedis Apostolicae*, Eugenius IV praised Bernardino as “a most acute and rigorous eradicator of heresy ... and the most famous preacher and most righteous teacher of the Catholic faith in almost all of Italy and beyond, approved and noted among the other famous heralds of the Word of God of the present age”.²¹ Turning to demonizing harmful magic was an effective means to deflect accusations of heresy and pre-empt attacks on his credibility by other members of the clergy. Gary K.

²⁰ Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons*, p. 88

²¹ Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons*, p. 89.

Waite points out how Bernardino's demonizing efforts "astutely turned away attention from suspicion of his own heterodox practices toward a more diabolical enemy".²²

The persistent demonizing of various religious deviants, such as witches, heretics, Jews and sodomites in his sermons deflected any lingering doubts by the authorities about the orthodoxy of his religious views and protected him from further incriminations. He was not only acquitted from the charges but was asked to remain in the city of Rome to deliver a series of sermons, one hundred and fourteen of them. The content of Bernardino's sermons in Rome are not known. The date of Bernardino's heresy trial in Rome has been a question of debate among modern historians. Mormando accepts 1426 as the date of Bernardino's trial in Rome and the delivery of his sermons based on correspondence between the office of the Pope and the civil officials in Siena dated 1427.²³ Bernardino's example illustrates two critical points that touched on the deepest social and political fears of the late Middle Ages. First, devil worshippers are portrayed as deceitful impostors passing as good Christians. Secondly, framing scapegoats as enemies of the Church by demonizing them through preaching was an effective tool in order to deflect suspicions and exculpate himself from charges of heresy.

3.2 – Johannes Nider's Conception of Demonic Magic

Dissemination of the cumulative concept of demonic sorcery usually occurred following a witch panic. Practical manuals tended to be written by inquisitors and jurists based on their own experience or their second-hand knowledge of a demonic cult.²⁴ As

²² Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft*, p. 39.

²³ Mormando, "Bernardino of Siena", p. 99.

²⁴ Peter Maxwell-Stuart, "The Contemporary Historical Debate, 1400-1750", in Jonathan Barry and Owen Davis (eds.), *Witchcraft Historiography* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), p. 16.

noted above, the secular judge Claude Tholosan wrote *Ut Magorum* in 1436 based on his experience and thoughts as a judge who convicted accused demonic heretics.²⁵ The *Formicarius* of the Dominican reformer Johannes Nider, written between 1436 and 1438, confirms even more the impression of the dispersal of the constitutive elements of the sabbath in the period of its creation.²⁶ Examples of preachers, discussed above, who had an influence on demonological writings are the Dominican preacher St. Vincent Ferrer, who preached anti-heretical and apocalyptic sermons in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, and Bernardino of Siena, who demonstrated his orthodoxy by demonizing practitioners of magic. Ferrer and Bernardino are both mentioned and praised by Nider in his *Formicarius*. Nider presented Ferrer as a model of Dominican Observance by emphasizing his regular observance (abstinence from eating meat, his devotion to poverty and his obedience) and praising the effectiveness of Ferrer's preaching.²⁷ Michael Bailey points out that "the *Formicarius* was the first written account to devote significant attention to the life of Ferrer, the future Dominican saint".²⁸ Bailey further comments that "Nider's *Formicarius* clearly placed him in the popular tradition of moralizing preachers such as Vincent Ferrer and Bernardino of

²⁵ Pierrette Paravy, "Claude Tholosan: *Ut magorum et maleficiorum errors...*", in *L'imaginaire du sabbath: édition critique des textes les plus anciens (1430 c. 1440.c)*, Marine Ostoréro, Agostino Paravicini, Kathrin Utz Tremp and Cathrine Chène (eds.) (Lausanne: Cahiers lausannois d'histoire, 1999), pp. 357-438.

²⁶ Chène, "Jean Nider: *Formicarius*", *L'imaginaire du sabbath*, pp. 99-265.

²⁷ Catherine Chène, "La plus ancienne vie de Vincent Ferrer racontée par le dominicain allemand Jean Nider (c.1380-1438)" in Paul-Bernard Hodel and Franco Morenzioni (eds.), *Mirificus praedicator: à l'occasion du sixième centenaire du passage de Saint Vincent Ferrer en pays romand* (Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, 2006), pp. 121-166.

²⁸ Bailey, *Battling Demons*, p. 100.

Siena”.²⁹ Both Ferrer and Bernardino are exalted by Nider in Book IV, chapter 9 of the *Formicarius*.³⁰

Nider was an Observant Dominican and an eminent professor at the University of Vienna, and for him, evil curses performed by the demonic and cannibalistic sect of demonic heretics were first and foremost material that he used to dispense moral education, whose objective was social reform through religious teaching. In this sense, the *Formicarius* is less of a demonological treatise, and more of a tool designed for pastoral work.³¹ However, this work occupies an important place in demonological literature, specifically because of a series of statements that Nider assembled in Book IV, chapters 3,4 and 7. Probably while at the Counsel of Basel, Nider reports having received these statements from two informants, a Dominican inquisitor active in the diocese of Autun and a secular judge from Berne named Peter, who both described their work against demonic sorcerers in the diocese of Lausanne, the territory of Berne and Haut-Simmental. Most significant, many of the accusations that served to forge the concept of the sabbath appear in these statements. The precise date of these statements is historically critical in establishing the chronology of the formation of the concept of the secret satanic gatherings because they reference the earliest occurrence of trials in which practitioners of magic are accused of devil worship as well as causing harm through *maleficia*.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the historian Joseph Hansen identified one of the informants of Nider, the secular judge named Peter, as Peter von Greyerz,

²⁹ Bailey, *Battling Demons*, p. 99.

³⁰ Michael D. Bailey, “The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms and Superstition in Early Modern European Literature”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 111, no. 2 (April 2006), p. 391.

³¹ Chène, “Jean Nider: *Formicarius*”, p. 202.

who administered the Haut-Simmental as bailiff between 1392 and 1406. This would date the beginning of satanic sorcery trials to the end of the fourteenth century. Considering that the reports attributed to this judge were related to the period when Peter administered this region, historians Andreas Blauert, Carlo Ginzburg, Arno Borst, Kathrin Utz Tremp, Martine Ostorero and Catherine Chène have emphasized the relevance of this information. Arno Borst rejects the idea that the creation of demonic witchcraft was due to the so-called “conservative” character of this region, which would have harboured pagan beliefs inherited from the early Middle Ages. He points out that the Simmental was a well-travelled region and that the sorcery trials occurred when the region came under the domination of Berne.³² Carlo Ginzburg used this information to establish a link between the persecution of lepers in 1321, the persecution of Jews in the middle of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the trials against demonic sorcerers and heretics which he dates c.1375, based on the information found in Book IV, chapter 4 of the *Formicarius*.³³

However, the precarious nature of the information has been noted by Andreas Blauert. His study of documents in the diocese of Lausanne, Savoy, Piedmont and the Alemannic territories (Basel and Lucerne) has revealed that when the trials began to multiply around 1400, it was almost exclusively a matter of *maleficium*, pointing out the absence of demonic elements. Based on this observation, he proposed two explanations: first, that it cannot be excluded that Nider had modified the reports given by his

³² Arno Borst, trans. Eric Hansen, *Medieval Worlds: Barbarians, Heretics and Artists in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 105 and his article “Anfänge des Hexenwahns in den Alpen”, in (Id.) *Barbaren, Ketzer und Artisten, Welten des Mittelalters* (München-Zürich, 1988), pp. 267-86, cited in Martine Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 62.

³³ Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 63-86.

informants that he collected in the 1430s, and eventually during the Council of Basel. Secondly, that the trials that occurred in Simmental constituted the rural variant of the Waldensian heresy trials that were taking place around the same time (1399), in the cities of Berne and Fribourg.³⁴ Kathrin Utz Tremp, however, finds it unlikely that Waldensians were even present in those cities or in Haut-Simmental in 1400. She and Martine Ostorero have both pointed out that it may have been Peter himself who embellished his report to Nider with other (unknown to us) sources.³⁵ Finally, Catherine Chène suggests that perhaps Hansen had altogether misidentified Peter as Peter von Greyerz and that historians have been looking in the wrong place all along. Between 1389 -1391, when Haut Simmental was acquired by Berne and 1437-1438, when the *Formicarius* was written, there were at least three bailiffs named *Peter*. Nider himself never provided the full name of his source nor the exact dates of the trials that supposedly involved the devil worship. In this regard, it cannot be discounted that the trials referred to in chapter 3 took place at a later date, even if they all took place in Simmental (which is not entirely clear in the text). If Chène is correct in calling into question the chronology, does the appearance of components related to the sabbath become more plausible if they appeared later than 1400?³⁶ Ronald Hutton agrees with

³⁴ Andreas Blauert, *Frühe Hexenverfolgungen: Ketzer - , Zauberei – und Hexenprozesse des 15. Jahrhunderts*, (Hamburg, 1989), 58-59. This hypothesis goes to Blauert central thesis that the concept of the sabbath, which emerged c. 1420-1430 in the Alpine region, would have progressively been disseminated following the Council of Basel, pp. 24-36. See also Hans Peter Broedel "Fifteenth-Century Witch Beliefs", in Brian P. Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 40.

³⁵ Kathrin Utz Tremp, "Ist Glaubenssache Frauensache?: zu den Anfängen der Hexenverfolgungen in Freiburg (um 1440)", *Freiburger Geschichtsblätter*, vol. 72 (1995), pp. 26-27; Martine Ostorero, "*Folâtrer avec les demons*": *Sabbat et chasse aux sorciers à Vevey (1448)* (Lausanne: Cahiers Lausannois d'histoire médiévale, 1995), p. 22.

³⁶ Chène, "Jean Nider: *Formicarius*", p. 203.

Chène that the chronology points to the 1420s, when accusations of devil worship begin to appear in recorded trials against demonic sorcerers.

For a long time, historians thought that this was the earliest datable reference to the new construct of the satanic cult, because Nider said that ‘Peter’ had conducted his campaign sixty years before. (...) Legal records for that valley survive which covers the years 1389-1415, and show no trials for witchcraft. The Valais hunt (1426) is therefore now the earliest based on the new stereotype of a satanic witch cult to be dated in the western Alps.³⁷

Nider used the accounts provided by his informants to define the practices of a new cult of devil worshipping heretics. Tracing accounts found in both sermons and trials confirms that the dissemination of ideas that helped to create the concept of satanic heresy found their way into practical manuals promoting the existence of a sect of demonic heretics after the fact, rather than originating them. In one particular account collected by Nider, the judge Peter informed him that a woman accused of demonic sorcery in Berne had confessed that members of her sect practiced the cannibalism of children and made powders and liquids out of them. According to her confession, unbaptized children were boiled until witches could make powders, unguents and liquids out of them, items used in their satanic ceremonies.³⁸

Chène points out that this beverage made from murdered babies originated from an “ancient accusation” made against heretics. Manicheans were accused of the same type of criminal activity c.1022.³⁹ The same type of accusation against heretics is again

³⁷ Hutton, *The Witch*, pp. 175-176.

³⁸ Chène, “Jean Nider: *Formicarius*”, p. 155.

³⁹ Ademard de Chabannes, *Chroniques*, J. Chavanon (ed.) (Paris, 1987), p. 184; Accusation that Manicheans used powders and liquids made from unbaptized children is referenced in Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom*, 3rd ed. (London: Random House, 2005), p. 131 and Ginzburg, *Le sabbat*, p. 86.

found in two chronicles of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁴⁰ In 1365, a Franciscan monk was accused of heresy in the framework of a Dominican inquisition pursuing Waldensian heretics in Piedmont. The monk confessed that he had participated in an orgy and that a woman there had given him a disgusting liquid made from the ‘dejections’ of a toad that she kept under her bed. Drinking this liquid made it impossible for that person to leave their sect.⁴¹ A similar allegation was repeated in Bernardino’s sermons delivered in Siena in 1427 against Waldensian heretics located in Piedmont. Bernardino preached that powders made out of unbaptized children were used to make a liquid that prevented the person who drank it from revealing the secrets of their sect.⁴² However, this practice was then used in another of Bernardino’s sermons to demonize witches. Bernardino preached that when he was in Rome (1426 or 1427), he had exposed a witch who had murdered her own son, that she then ate him and made powders and unguents out of him. She had murdered her child by sucking his blood and fabricated unguents that when applied made her believe that she could transform herself into a cat.⁴³ The impact of Bernardino’s anti-witchcraft sermons in 1426 in Todi had caused the town to turn against Matteuccia de Francesco in 1428, a case mentioned above.⁴⁴ The reference to a liquid made from the corpses of unbaptized children in a trial in Berne is thus intriguing. The story was a third-hand account by the time it found

⁴⁰ See Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons*, for Saint Pierre de Chartres c. 1090, p. 39 and for Guibert de Nogaret c. 1120, p. 72.

⁴¹ Chène, “Jean Nider: *Formicarius*”, p. 240.

⁴² Chène, “Jean Nider: *Formicarius*”, p. 240.

⁴³ The chronology for Bernardino’s sermons in Rome is uncertain. Ginzburg gives 1427, *Le sabbat*, p. 271. Mormando states that “it is impossible to reconstruct the itinerary with certainty”, but perhaps 1426, see *The Preacher’s Demons*, p. 235. For the specific sermon in which Bernardino describes the Roman witch who murdered her son and believed she could turn into a cat, see Bernardino da Siena, *Prediche volgari*, tome II, preadica XXXV, (Firenze, 1427), Carlo Delcorno (ed.), 2 vols. (Milan: Rusconi, 1989), pp. 1007-1009.

⁴⁴ Bernardino first preached in Todi in 1426, see Mormando, *The Preacher’s Demons*, pp. 72-75.

its way into the *Formicarius*. The accused first confessed this practice to the judge Peter, who repeated this account to Nider, who then transcribed it in the *Formicarius*.⁴⁵ As Chène points out, while the beverage described in the testimony of the woman in Berne does not correspond exactly with Bernardino's description, the two accounts present many similarities. It begs the question as to whether the sermon of the Franciscan preacher, directly or indirectly, was the origin, at least in part, for the practices described in this confession.⁴⁶ Tracing an account describing a practice that was first used to demonize heretics and then sorcerers in the discourse of mendicant friars shows that sermons could trigger a kind of feedback effect. The practice of creating a liquid or unguents made from unbaptized babies was historically used to demonize heretics. This demonic practice was later used by Bernardino to identify those who practice sorcery. We then find a similar description in a sorcery trial in Berne. The content of the confession was then conveyed to Nider who used it as evidence to support the existence of a sect of demonic heretics who worship the devil: "certain sorcerers had cooked their own newly born children and ate them. Sorcerers confess that they attended a certain gathering, and because of their labour, they had seen, in a visible manner, the devil who had taken the form of a man". Nider then quoted the confession of the accused woman in Berne who created a liquid made from unbaptized children in order to use it to perform satanic rituals.⁴⁷ Since the *Formicarius* was designed to be used as a practical manual for preachers to instruct the faithful, the cycle of dissemination would

⁴⁵ For Nider's account of the confession of the accused witch in Berne related by Peter, see Chène, "Jean Nider: *Formicarius*", p. 155.

⁴⁶ Chène, "Jean Nider: *Formicarius*", p. 241.

⁴⁷ Chène, "Jean Nider: *Formicarius*", p. 155.

start over again when these types of accounts were used as *exempla* and repeated in subsequent sermons.

To the three chapters relating to the sorcery trials in the diocese of Lausanne, Chène adds chapter 4 of Book II, in which Nider invoked beliefs of night flying in two *exempla*. On a demonological level, one of these *exempla* is particularly interesting. The tale, while conveying a traditional interpretation – that night flying is an illusion – contains a remarkable number of elements of the sabbath that are found in other demonological works or the trials against sorcerers that occurred later in the fifteenth century – such as the use of unguents and magical spells in satanic rituals – in which night flying was perceived as real. In this regard, this *exemplum* is a revealing aspect of the transformations that were taking place in the perceptions and beliefs in the sabbath. Elements of the sabbath, such as the night flying, were being shaped in order to transform them from illusion to real activity.

Chapter 4 of the *Formicarius* is part of the series of chapters that deal with dreams. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 deal with dreams sent by God, while chapter 4, in which we find the following story, discusses dreams that can deceive those that do not account for their origin, namely the devil.⁴⁸ The *exemplum* describes a senile woman who dreamt, but believing she was awake, that she went flying with Diana and other women. She was confronted by a preacher, but the woman stubbornly refused to accept the itinerant preacher's clarification that it was nothing but evil visions, saying that he should come

⁴⁸ Nider develops a typology of dreams, where they either come from God, the devil or natural causes (humors). His typology on dreams as revelations of God or deceptions from the devil is based on Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas. Nider, *Formicarius*, II, 4, p. 125 in *L'imaginaire du sabbath*, which cites Grégoire le Grand, *Dialogues*, 3 vols., Adalbert de Vogüé and Paul Antinpp (eds.) (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980), pp. 172-175 and Thomas d'Aquin, *Somme Théologique* Tome 3, Aimon-Marie Roguet et al. (eds.) (Paris: Éditions du Cerfs, 1984), pp. 2080-2105.

along with her next time, and that he will see her fly, and if he so desires, in the presence of appropriate and pious witnesses. When the time came for her to join the other women in night flying, the woman applied ointment on herself, seated on a small ladder used in the making of bread dough, pronounced magical words, and fell asleep with her head bent back. The work of the devil then took over. The woman began to scream in a low voice and move her hands about violently. In one movement she pushed over a bowl, fell off the ladder and the bowl fell on her head. The preacher confronted the woman now awake: “Where are you, I pray to know? Are you perhaps with Diana, you who never left your seat according to the people here present?” With the test accomplished and through those words of salvation, the priest was able to convince the woman to detest her error. Nider goes on to explain that the woman was thus deceived by the devil, and that he was able to take advantage of her lack of faith in order to take hold of her spirit.⁴⁹ Bailey notes that “Nider was often skeptical about visionary experiences”.⁵⁰ Dreams and visions could be forms of demonic deception, as in the story of the woman who believed she could fly. They could also be made up by people claiming to have divine revelations who were motivated by greed and malice or seeking to gain attention and notoriety. It was difficult to establish the true nature and origin of dreams and visions, and Nider thus warned against placing too much faith in them. However, in the *Formicarius*, the story of the woman who believed she could fly by performing magical rituals reflected Nider’s concerns over sorcery and his adherence to the canon *Episcopi*.⁵¹ This kind of narrative also allowed Nider to provide a religious *exemplum*

⁴⁹ Chène, “Jean Nider: *Formicarius*”, p. 125.

⁵⁰ Bailey, *Battling Demons*, p. 112.

⁵¹ Bailey, *Battling Demons*, p. 114.

that provided a moral message structured by the scholastic approach to the composition of thematic sermons.

The *exemplum* conveys a moral lesson that is twice mentioned. The story notes that the woman was senile and that she performed night flying with other women, which echoes the delusional aspect of night flying in the canon *Episcopi*. The text of the canon explains that demons deceive women and adopt for themselves a feminine form and reiterates again that these nocturnal meetings are imagined and not real. Nider cited this passage at the end of the *exemplum* referring to the version of the canon presented in the *Decretum* of the monk Gratian.⁵²

The comparison of Nider's *exemplum* with the normative text of the canon allows categorizing this *exemplum* as a synecdochic or inductive type of *exempla*. It demonstrates the general message that women who believe they flew with Diana were deceived by the devil, through the specific case of the old woman in the story.⁵³ The message is articulated by four moments that replicate the sequence type of the *exemplum* story.⁵⁴ First, the story begins with the *introducing circumstances* where the Dominican preacher is informed that an old woman has apparently lost her mind and believes that she can fly. When he attempts to convince her to renounce this belief, she stubbornly opposes his opinion with her own experience. Second, *the test* is performed and ends with the bowl falling on her head, made explicit by the Dominican when he points out

⁵² The text of the *Canon Episcopi* was reproduced in the eleventh century by Burchard, bishop of Worms, who included it in his *Decretum* by erroneously attributing it to the Council of Ancyra (314). This version would again be reproduced in the twelfth century by the canonist Ivo of Chartres and the monk Gratian in *Coprus iuris canonici*, ensuring its dissemination. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, pp. 211-212; Ginzburg, *Le sabbath*, pp. 97-100.

⁵³ Bremond, Le Goff, Schmitt, L'"*exemplum*", pp. 115-119.

⁵⁴ Bremond, Le Goff, Schmitt, L'"*exemplum*", pp. 124-126.

that she is not in the air and that she was never in the air. Third, *merit or un-merit*, by recognizing her error and renouncing the belief, the woman adopts a praiseworthy attitude aligned with Church precepts. Fourth, *reward or punishment*: implicitly, she is rewarded by ensuring her salvation. This *exemplum*'s moral message is that it is heretical to believe that night flying is real, because it is a delusion caused by the devil. Nider emphasizes the woman's weak faith to explain how the devil was able to cause her delusion. In the context of the conciliarist dispute, the contrast between the literal reality of demonic corruption and salvation parallels the conciliarist message that those who are against the program of reforming the Church are corrupt and agents of Satan.

Nider's *Formicarius* (1437) was written during the period of the creation of the satanic gatherings. Four other works detailing the satanic rituals of sorcerers appeared in the same decade: Hans Fründ's *Von den Hexen, so in Wallis verbrant wurdent (Report on the Valais Witch Hunt)* (1430); the anonymous *Errores Gazariorum*, probably written by the Franciscan inquisitor Ponce Feugeyron⁵⁵; Tholosan's *Ut Magorum* (1436); and Martin Franc's poem *Le champion des dames* (1440-1442).⁵⁶ The emergence of a phenomenon beginning to be identified in the 1420s, was soon to be disseminated in the rest of Christianity, certainly through the connections and exchanges made possible at the Council of Basel (1431-1449), as well as through sermons and demonological treatises.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Martine Ostorero, "Itinéraire d'un inquisiteur gâté: Ponce Feugeyron, les juifs et le sabbat des sorciers", *Médiévale*, no. 43 (2002), pp. 103-117.

⁵⁶ Edited and translated versions of each text is found in Ostorero, Bagliani, Utz Temp and Chène, *L'imaginaire du sabbat: Édition critique des textes les plus anciens (1430 c. – 1440 c.)* (Lausanne : Cahier Lausannois d'histoire médiévale, 1999).

⁵⁷ Brian P. Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016); Michael D. Bailey, "The Medieval Concept of the Witches Sabbath", *Exemplaria*, no. 8 (1996), pp. 419-439 and J.-

3.3 – Guillaume Adeline and the Satanic Gatherings

During the 1430s, the concept of the secret nocturnal satanic gatherings had begun to be developed.⁵⁸ The notion that demonic heretics and sorcerers were secretly gathering to perform satanic rituals and worship the devil was a precursor to the fully developed concept of the witches' sabbath in the sixteenth century. The case of Guillaume Adeline deserves to be examined because it reflects a kind of reverse demonizing rhetoric. Adeline was condemned as a demonic heretic because he was allegedly preaching that the physical reality of the alleged satanic gatherings of demonic heretics was a delusion. Displaying skepticism concerning the reality of demonic heresy could also be dangerous. This is what Guillaume Adeline found out. Adeline was a Benedictine preacher and Master of Theology who allegedly preached in the 1430s that the satanic gatherings and the satanic sect demonic heretics were not real. This skeptical discourse was in direct contradiction with trials against practitioners of harmful magic accused of devil worship and the dissemination of demonological literature that were occurring in that same decade. Martine Ostorero carefully studied this case in the context of her analysis of the emerging demonological literature of the 1440s and 1450s: *Le diable au sabbat: Littérature démonologique et sorcellerie (1440-1460)*.⁵⁹ Adeline's case was extensively discussed and used as a formidable example of demonic corruption

P. Boudet, "La genèse médiévale de la chasse aux sorcières – Jalon en vue d'une lecture", in N. Nabet (ed.), *Le Mal et le diable: Leurs figures à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), pp. 34-52.

⁵⁸ Bailey, "The Medieval Concept of the Witches' Sabbath", pp. 419-439; and "From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages", *Speculum*, no. 76, no. 4 (2001), pp. 960-990.

⁵⁹ Martine Ostorero, "Un prédicateur au cachot: Guillaume Adeline et le sabbat", *Médiévale*, (no. 44, 2003), pp. 73-96; and her monograph *Le diable au sabbat, Littérature démonologique et sorcellerie (1440-1460)* (Florence: Sismel, 2011), p. 650.

by the preachers and inquisitors, the authors of the works analyzed by Ostorero, who examines how they were actively promoting the reality of a sect of devil worshippers. Following the description in the canon *Episcopi* of the tenth century, Adeline alleged that the witches' sabbath, the demonic pact and night flying were all demonic illusions created by Satan in the minds of people. In December 1453, he was summoned by the bishop of Évreux in Normandy and was formally accused of being part of a "synagogue vaudoise", the term used to designate a sect of devil worshippers as being part of a demonic conspiracy and participating in secret satanic gatherings.⁶⁰ Supposedly, Guillaume had participated in many nocturnal satanic rituals in Franche-Comté in 1438 with up to a thousand people. Probably under torture, he confessed that he had joined the sect of the devil in order to resolve a conflict with the lord of Clairvaux. He then gave a description of the satanic gatherings. He had met the devil, addressed him as "my lord", who appeared in human form, and then as a goat when it was time to perform the obscene kiss. After his confession, Adeline renounced his membership to the damned *vaudois* sect and admitted to the crimes alleged against him. During his abjuration, he added a crucial point: the devil had ordered him to preach that the satanic gatherings and the *vaudois* sect were only illusion and fantasy. The devil ordered him to do this in order to increase his power and domination in the world. The logic which animated this twisted accusation was that if people believed it was all a deception, the devil would then have a superior advantage in corrupting unsuspecting Christians to his cause.

⁶⁰ "Guillaume Adeline, a Benedictine, confesses to taking part in the sabbath, 1453", document 9, Part III (a), in P.G. Maxwell-Stuart (ed.), *Witch Beliefs and Witch Trials in the Middle Ages: Documents and Readings* (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 149-153.

As Martine Ostorero has pointed out, the case of Guillaume Adeline is exceptional for two reasons: first, it presents a clergyman and a master theologian no less, as being a member of a demonic sect. Second, it shows how a preacher supposedly abused his power to trick people into believing that the demonic sect did not exist, insidiously allowing the sect to develop and operate.⁶¹ Adeline was thus described as a double agent who was ultimately serving Satan under the pretence of serving God. His conviction was a way for the authorities to make an example out of a ‘non-believer’, to designate as heretics those who deny the material reality of the satanic gatherings and the satanic sect, and to discredit those who deny that its members are able fly by referring to the canon *Episcopi*.⁶² The question of whether these satanic nocturnal gatherings were real or imagined is one of the demonological issues being debated in the fifteenth century. Martine Ostorero squarely places this case at the centre of the theological debate concerning the powers and abilities of the devil, of demons and sorcerers during the crucial period when demonological theories were still in a process of defining the contours of demonic sorcery and those who belonged to its sect.⁶³ Moreover, this case not only helped to define witchcraft theory, but it was also a means to validate, promote and most importantly to circulate demonological theory through a formidable and tangible example.

This case is related through a partial copy of the official trial transcripts preserved in the Latin manuscript 3446 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Editions of the transcripts can also be found in Joseph Hansen’s *Quellen und*

⁶¹ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 650.

⁶² Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 649.

⁶³ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 651.

Untersuchungen and in P.G. Maxwell-Stuart's edited source book concerning late medieval witch trials.⁶⁴ This transcript relates seven articles extracted from the procedure (*articuli extracti de principali processu*) and a brief summary of the *informatio*. Then follows Adeline's abjuration in front of the judges and a summary of the final sentence condemning him to perpetual prison and the confiscation of his ministry and of his benefice. More than thirty charges were laid against Adeline. Seven of them concerning the satanic gatherings were sent to be evaluated by the theologians of the University of Paris. The nature of these gatherings as either an illusion or physical reality was a question being debated among theologians and the authorities could strengthen their case against Adeline by having their evidence validated by the faculty of theology in Paris. These seven charges and Adeline's confession are what remain of the official trial document. They report that Adeline participated in the "synagogue des vaudois" around 1438 and further describe the satanic ceremonies which took place. Adeline was further charged with simony, perjury, that he lived in debauchery, was said to be an adulterer, to be incestuous with his own niece, that he neglected canonical hours and finally that he was sacrilegious and a thief. This excessive number of accusations betrays the firm will by the judicial and religious authorities to pursue him and discredit him with the worst possible accusations. The excessive nature of the charges reflects other medieval cases where political figures were discredited with an overabundance of demonizing accusations. James de Moley (Grand Master of the Knights Templar –

⁶⁴ Joseph Hansen, *Quellen und Untersuchungen* (Bonn, 1901), pp. 467-472; P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Witch Beliefs and Witch Trials in the Middle Ages: Documents and Readings* (New York: Continuum, 2011) pp. 149-153. Both reproduce: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms. lat. 3446, fols. 62v-65r.

1329) and Joan of Arc (1429) were both accused of sexual deviance and of devil worship.⁶⁵

According to the official documents in 1453, the rumours of Adeline's membership in a demonic sect began to circulate around 1438 in Franche-Compté. There is no corroborating evidence from the 1430s to confirm these rumours. Adeline had made many potentially lethal enemies earlier in the 1430s when he was preaching for the supremacy of the Roman papacy, probably during the first years of the Council of Basel, which opened in 1431. He openly took a position against the conciliarist movement, members of which advocated for Church authority to be vested in a Church council rather than a single authoritative pope.⁶⁶ This unpopular position created several menacing enemies to the point where he felt his life to be in danger.⁶⁷ Conciliarism had already been used as a proxy for accusations of devil worship by those on both sides of the issue. The accusations against Adeline echo Pope Eugenius IV's accusations of devil worship and supporting diabolical sorcerers in 1440 against antipope Felix V during the Council of Basel over the question of conciliarism.⁶⁸ In 1438, while prior of the Carmel monastery in Clairvaux in Franche-Compté, Adeline supposedly attended the satanic gatherings to worship the devil. In return for his allegiance, the devil would ensure that Adeline could gain favour with the Lord of Clairvaux, "who had a deadly hatred for

⁶⁵ Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft*, pp. 28-32.

⁶⁶ See H. Denifle and E. Chatelain, *Chartularium Universitatis parisiensis*, tome I (Paris: 1897), pp. 616-617. For the link between the development of demonological theory and the conciliarist movement at the Council of Basel (1431-1445) see Michael D. Bailey and Edward Peters, "A Sabbat of Demonologists: Basel, 1431-1440", *The Historian*, vol. 65, no. 6 (Winter 2003), p. 1377. For Eugenius IV's accusations, see Frances Courtney Kneupper, "Conciliarist Employment of Eschatology during and after the Council of Basel (1431-1460)" in Mathieu Caesar (ed.), *Factional Struggles: Divided Elites in European Cities & Courts (1400-1750)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 68.

⁶⁷ The passage in the cartulary is based on the text of the anonymous Carthusian cited above. The petition to the University of Paris to review Adeline's case explains the inclusion of the text.

⁶⁸ Bailey and Edwards, "A Sabbat of Demonologists", p. 1381.

him”. In exchange for demonic favours, Adeline had to preach that the satanic gatherings did not really exist.⁶⁹ Ostorero has traced the conflict between the Lord of Clairvaux, Guillaume de Villers-Sexel, and Adeline back to 1434. The conflict was instigated over the rights to revenues from a hospital and two church properties because of ambiguous charter clauses. Adeline was one of the first priors of the new monastery and was portrayed as an ungrateful and demanding prior in the face of the lord’s generosity.⁷⁰ The rumours that he belonged to a “secte de vaudrie”, that he participated in satanic rituals and preached on their non-existence, were said to begin to spread around 1438. However, these two events are only known through the formal accusations made against him in 1453.

In the 1430s, demonological theory was already being used in Franche-Comté. There were sorcery trials in the Besançon region where a man and a woman were burned in 1434 and the bailiff of Maçon condemned a man to the stake in 1437 for invoking demons.⁷¹ In 1439, five persons in Besançon received official absolution from Rome for their alleged crimes and for belonging to the “damned vaudois sect”.⁷² Correspondingly, Adeline’s sermons went against, if not the official objectives, at least the dominant views concerning religious and judicial conformity. Nider’s pro-conciliarist position and his belief in the reality of demonic sorcery as formulated in the *Formicarius*, indicate that witchcraft prosecutions were being strongly promoted by the

⁶⁹ Hansen, *Quellen*, pp. 467-472 and Maxwell-Stuart, *Witch Beliefs*, pp. 149-153.

⁷⁰ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 656.

⁷¹ A.M. de Besançon BB 2, F^o 112, cited in William E. Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands During the Reformation* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 19; and Hansen, *Quellen*, no. 49, p. 546.

⁷² See Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 657 and Filippo Tamburini, “Suppliche per casi di stregoneria diabolica nei registri della penitenzieria e conflitti inquisitoriali (sec. XV-XVI)”, *Critica storica*, no. 23 (1986), pp. 605-659.

conciliarists. Adeline had preached ideas contrary to opinions that were becoming dominant in certain regions, such as in conciliarist circles which Michael Bailey and Peter Edwards have shown had clear ties to the development of demonological theory,⁷³ and in Burgundy, Savoy and the western Alps, where practitioners of magic were being accused of worshipping the devil. By the end of the 1430s, Adeline was locked in a concurrence of economic, political and ideological conflicts, with either his own religious order or with the Lord of Clairvaux, all coinciding with rumours of demonic worship. Oddly, these rumours only gave way to formal accusations fifteen years after the fact.⁷⁴

The Dominican inquisitor Nicolas Jacquier was the first to write about Adeline's case in 1457. He mentioned him twice in his writings and said he had met with him frequently. Jacquier was an inquisitor active principally in Bourgogne. He wrote *Tractatus de calcatione daemonum* in 1457 and the influential *Flagellum hereticorum fascinariorum* in 1458, one of the first texts to discuss the satanic gatherings and demonology.⁷⁵ Jacquier reports in his *De calcacione demonum* that Adeline was in the region of Saint-Galmier in 1452, a year before his trial, preaching to the people not to

⁷³ Bailey and Edwards, "A Sabbath of Demonologists: Basel, 1431–1440", *The Historian* (no. 65, vol. 6, 2003), pp. 1375–1395.

⁷⁴ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 657.

⁷⁵ Nicolas Jacquier, *Tractatus de calatione demonum* (1457) is a small treaty concerning the powers of demons and their influence over humans. There are eight known manuscripts of *De calatione daemonum*, however there are no published versions. Original Latin excerpts are reproduced in Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, Annex 5, pp. 746–751. *Flagellum hereticorum fascinariorum* (1458) is Jacquier's treatise on the witches' sabbath and the existence of a demonic sect of witches. He said he met Guillaume Adeline and cites his case a proof of his argument. "hunc magistrum guillermum ego qui hec scribo novi et frequentissime vidi antequam esset de hoc crimine suspectus; This new teacher Guillaume of whom I, who is writing these things, saw frequently before there was suspicion of a crime", Jacquier, *Flagellum* (Frankfurt, 1581), p. 27.

believe in the satanic gatherings.⁷⁶ Jacquier was potentially a direct witness since he was in Saint-Galmier that same year to investigate cases of demonic possession as the vice-inquisitor of Lyon. Adeline's case is used as an example to get around the canon *Episcopi* since it was clear that demonic heretics like Adeline used it to persuade the authorities not to pursue this heretical and demonic sect. Jacquier gave an even more important place to Adeline's case in the *Flagellum hereticorum* written a year later (1458). He repeats the same argument stressing the ways that demons deceive and trick people into seeing and believing false things. Jacquier provides a description of Adeline's trial, placing the emphasis on his confession and abjuration, and how it was the devil in person who commanded Adeline to deceive his audience by preaching that the satanic gatherings were nothing but an illusion.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Jacquier, *De calcatione demonum*: "Iste Magister Guillelmus, audito rumore eorum que fiebant in Sancto Baldomero circa demonum coniurationes et assertiones eorum illuc, clam advenit ut, si videret opportunitate, predicaret hec illusoria et non credenda; This Master Guillaume, I had heard a report of things that were done in secret in the conspiracy of demons and of their assertions that in Saint- Galmier (Sancto Baldomero) that he came, and if he could see to the circumstances, to preach that this illusion was not to be believed." In Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, Annex 5, p. 746.

⁷⁷ Jacquier, *Flagellum*, p. 27. "Magister Guilherlmus Adelme, anno domini M. CCCC. LIII. (1453) die 12 mensis septembris in Capella Episcopali Ebrouicensi iudicialiter coram iudicibus fidei, cum lachrymis in terram prostratus, exhibuit quandam schedulam continentem sua commissa, contra fidem in dicta jaeresi & sectam, offerendo praedictis iudicibus abjurationem. Ipsa autem schedula continebat inter caetera, quod quando ipse fuit intoductus ad dictam sectam, diabolus asserebat, quod ipse magister Guilhelmus bene posset si vellet, augmentater eiusdem demonis domonium, praecipiendo eidem Magistro Guihelmo praedicare, quod huisumodi secta non erat nisi illusio, & quod hoc praedicaret, ad contendandum populum patriae, ubi tunc morabatur ipse Magister Guihelmus. Hunc Magistrum Guihelmmum".

"Master Guillaume Adeline, year of our lord 1453 on the 12th day of the month of September, in the Chapel of the Episcopal of Evreux to be judged in front of the judges of faith, with tears, prostrated to the ground, he confessed his crimes against the faith, offering the aforementioned court his abjuration, and his sect in the said heresy against us, and offered what has been said to the judges that abjuration. Moreover, on the accusations form contained, among other things, that when he was introduced to the said sect, the devil he asserted, [asked] that he might, if he thought good, Master Guillaume, if you add the same domination of the devil, commanded Master Guillaume to preach to the same, which is the sect does not exist, was nothing but illusion, and that he preach the Gospel to convince people of the country, where he was staying , and what he had taught Master Guillaume".

Pierre Mamoris, a monk and professor of theology, also declares to have known Adeline at the faculty of theology at the University of Poitiers and expands at length on Adeline's trial in his *Flagellum maleficorum* (1488).⁷⁸ Mamoris speaks of Adeline at the end of his treatise to support his position in favour of the reality of the satanic gatherings. He uses Adeline's case as an example in order to close the debate and to convince his readers of the correct religious and intellectual attitude to adopt concerning the reality of satanic gatherings. Following a lengthy investigation into the supernatural, in the last chapter Mamoris gives a final answer to these questions: the facts and events of his era cause him to accept the reality of satanic rituals, regardless of the canon *Episcopi*. He then cites the case of Adeline, who really went to demonic nocturnal assemblies where a demon taught him to preach to the people that the demonic sect was only an illusion of the mind with the objective to allow devil worshippers to better recruit new members. For Mamoris, it is dangerous to follow the canon *Episcopi* and this example allows him to conclude his demonstration and to take a final stance on the issue.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Pierre Mamoris, *Flagellum maleficorum*, (Lyon, 1621), pp. 72-73. See translation below.

⁷⁹ See p. 72-73 of Mamoris' *s Flagellum Maleficorum*: "Magister Guillelmus de Lure monachus ordinis sancti Benedicti magistri in theologie, magnus predicator in verbis plusquam in scientia, quem sepe Pictais vidi et cum eo frequenter sum locutus, pro quo supplicatum fuit ut in consortio magistrorum et in facultate theologie Pictavis reciperetur; receptusque fuit parumque profecit in facultate quando de maleficio accusatus fuit et convictus et anno dmi m^o cccc^o quinquagesimi tercio die duodecima mensis decembris in capella domini episcopi Ebroicensis judicialiter in conspectu suorum iudicum confessus fuit quod ipse cum complicibus suis realiter et pluries ad nocturnum cultum demonis ivit, ibidemque demones coluit qui aliquando in forma hominis alias in forma hominis alias in forma hirci apparebat et ad instanciam demonis Christum et Mariam Virginem, sanctam crucem et articulos fidei negavit, et prostrando in terram plorando exhibuit iudicibus suis quondam cedula ubi inter cetera continebatur quod dum introductus fuit in sectam demonis precepit illi demon ut predicaret in populo quod huiusmodi secta non erat nisi illusio fantasie, et sic predicando augebatur secta illa nephanda quare sic predicando reddebantur malefici audaciores ad introducendum alios in suam sectam. Et Iudices ecclesie pro hoc ad inquirendum de maleficis errant remissiores. Ex quibus dictus magister Guillelmus de Lure

The exceptional case of Adeline caused a great stir and was widely disseminated between 1450 and 1500. The story was related by at least nine authors in their works, showing that this case was of interest to theologians and chroniclers. It is precisely the density in the reproduction of the story which reveals how much this case had become a cause of great preoccupation.⁸⁰ Jacquier and Mamoris gave Adeline's case a prominent place in their works promoting the reality of demonic sorcery. We can also find Adeline's story repeated with varying degrees of accuracy in the works of at least four chroniclers of the fifteenth century.⁸¹ In 1580, Jean Bodin recounts the case in his *Démonomanie* citing Pierre Mamoris.⁸² The case of Adeline was even made into a

condempnatus ad perpetuos carceres, tempore post in cacenbus obiit. Ex quo patet quod adherere indiscrete illi decreto Episcopi periculosum est"; "Master Guillermus de Lure (Guillaume Adeline), a monk of the order of St. Benedict, master of theology, more of a great preacher in words than in knowledge, as I said I saw him frequently at Poitiers which I was often with him, for which in the company of the mendicant masters of the Faculty of Theology of Poitiers he was to be received; when he was accused and guilty of the crime, was received and advanced, and in the faculty of being convicted of the third day of the twelfth day of the month of December, the year of Our Lord and in the chapel but in order to be judged in the sight of the fathers, of all the judges and of the lord bishop Evreux he said that he confessed that a number of times that at night and in the service of the devil, he really went with his accomplices, at the same time in the form of men, another of the demons in the form of a man who at one time served in the form of the he-goat appeared and at the instance of the other devil he denied Jesus Christ, and the Virgin Mary, the holy cross, and the articles of faith, and confessed to the judges on his own, by weeping, prostrated on the ground, while he had once been introduced, so as, among other things, where he was in pursuit of the devil ordered him to preach to the people and demonstrate that this type of sect was not and only illusion and imagination, and thus increased the sect with this nefarious preaching and by so bold preaching worked and returned to introduce others in his party. And judgments of the sorcerers concerning this, to inquire into the remission. From these master Guillermo de Lure condemned to perpetual imprisonment, after confessing. From this it is evident that he persists so indifferently that it is dangerous to follow the *Canon Episcopi*".

⁸⁰ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 652.

⁸¹ Anonymous, *Recollectio casus, status et condicionis Valdensium ydolatrarum*, (1460), ms. lat. 3446 of the BnF. For the identification of Jacques du Bois (Dean of the cathedral of Arras) as the author, see Frank Mercier, *La Vauderie d'Arras: Une chasse aux sorcières à l'Automne du Moyen Âge* (Rennes: Presses Universitaire de Rennes, 2006), p. 31-32. *Recollectio* is reproduced in Hansen, *Quellen*, pp. 149-183; Jacques du Clerq (1420-1501), *Mémoires*, Reiffenberg edition, tome III, pp. 153-154; Jean Chartier (c. 1385/90-1464) reproduces almost word for word Jacques du Clerq's version, *Chronique de Charles VII, roi de France*, A. Vallet de Viriville (ed.), tome III (Paris, 1858), reprint Nendeln, 1979, Ch. 270, pp. 44-46.

⁸² Jean Bodin, *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (Anvers: Keerberghes, 1593), preface, p. 5-6. Bodin uses the name Guillaume de Lure (Guillaume Adeline) and dates the case incorrectly as 1553 (typo?). The

sermon in northern France. The Dominican preacher Martin Francois adapted the case in an historical *exemplum* in order to preach against “the adversaries of truth”, found in his alphabetical collection of sermon themes written around 1480. He denounces Adeline’s transience as he went from one religious order to another and from one region to another. Martin Francois had preached for over a year between 1459 and 1460 in Evreux in the same period of the witch hunts of Arras in northern France.⁸³ Finally, an anonymous Carthusian monk from Normandy relates the case trial in great detail in his *Dialogus de diversarum religionum origine* (...) written after 1485.⁸⁴ Indeed, originally from Evreux, he seems to have been a privileged witness of the case and recopied Adeline’s confession and the trial transcripts.

Another document that sheds light on Adeline before his trial and that helps to better evaluate the accuracy of other evidence concerning Adeline’s life is a petition (*supplique*) addressed to Eugenius IV in 1441, published in the *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* by the Austrian historian Henri (Heinrich) Denifle, who added an annotation.⁸⁵ This document reveals a large part of Adeline’s itinerary, revealing a strong and complex personality. He continuously transitioned from one religious order to another and traveled extensively throughout France. Adeline was clearly not afraid to

citation of Mamoris to reference the case of a preacher who is ordered by the devil to preach that satanic gatherings is an illusion leaves no doubt that he is speaking of Guillaume Adeline.

⁸³ J. Quetif and J. Echard, *Scriptores ordinis Pradicatorum*, tome I (Paris, 1719), pp. 854-855, n. 118. The preacher is anonymous in *the Scriptores (Gallus anonymous)*, for the identification of Martin François see Th. Kaepelli, *Scriptores ordinis Praedicatorum*, tome III, (Rome, 1980), p. 113; For Martin François’ preaching chronology, see Hervé Martin, *Métier du prédicateur*, pp. 158-160, p. 181 footnote no. 115 and pp. 531-532.

⁸⁴ Document no. 45. “(1485-1489) - Aus dem Dialogus Anonymi monachi Cartusiensis Vallis-Dei: *De diversarum religionum origine*”, in Hansen, *Quellen*, pp. 240-242.

⁸⁵ Denifle and Chatelain, *Chartularium*, tome IV, pp. 616-617, document no. 2546. The editor had no knowledge of the trial transcript and relied exclusively on the text of the anonymous Carthusian monk. The inclusion of the petition in the cartulary is justified by the fact that the University of Paris had intervened during Adeline’s trial. See Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 649.

expose himself through his audacious preaching that was often not well received. These details help to explain in part why he found himself in the dungeons of Evreux in December 1453.

Some details concerning Adeline's life are revealed in his petition for exoneration submitted to Eugenius IV. Adeline was born in Saint-Hilaire between 1400 and 1410 and first entered the order of the Carmelites. He did his cursus in Avignon under Jean Faci, general prior of the Carmelites in Provence (1434-1450), until he pursued a license in theology. However, Adeline could not receive the official title of doctor because of his impoverished state. He had to wait another twenty years before he could receive his title and be able to teach in universities.⁸⁶ Kathrin Utz Temp notes his presence in Fribourg in her analysis of the inquisitorial repression of heretics and witches. His first known activity as preacher was in Fribourg, where he gave sermons for a month in 1430, just after a wave of prosecution against Waldensian heretics, which then turned into a witch hunt.⁸⁷ However, the specific topics of his sermons remain unknown.⁸⁸

Because of the content in his public sermons, as detailed in the petition addressed to Eugenius IV in the cartulary, Adeline had made many enemies who

⁸⁶ See the transcript of Adeline's abjuration in Hassen, *Quellen*, p. 470; and the editor's annotation in Adeline's petition to Eugenius IV in Vatican, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, *Registri Suppliche Eugen IV*, no. 366, fol. 75, in Hansen, *Quellen*, p. 616.

⁸⁷ Utz Temp, "The Heresy of Witchcraft", p. 5.

⁸⁸ Kathrin Utz Temp, "Predigt und Inquisition: Der Kampf gegen die Häresie in der Stadt Freiburg (erste Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts)", in Paul Bernard Hodel and Franco Morenzioni (eds.), *Mirificus Praedicator: À l'occasion du sixième centenaire du passage de Saint Vincent Ferrer en pays romand* (Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, 2006), p. 222 - footnote 50: Stafreiburg, SMR 56 (1430/II), 35 (Mission pour schengar): "Item: a frere Guillaume Adelena preschiour Carnioz pour iii pot clarey et iii pot vin, xiii s vi d", idem 56 (Mission communal): Item a behart Chaucy pour despens fait per meistre Guillaume le carmelin et ses conpag(nons) qui sey presgeast per l'espace d'ung moix, ord(onne) per Messeigeurs que l'on devoit payer ses despens, ...xxvii lb."

conspired against him, threatening him to the point where he felt his life to be in danger. These threats were probably in response to the fact that Adeline preached numerous times for the supremacy of the Roman papacy, probably during the first years of the Council of Basel opened in 1431. The sources present Adeline as against the prosecution of demonic sorcerers and an anti-conciliarist, openly preaching against both the reality of the satanic gatherings and against the authority of a church council that would supersede the pope. In contrast, those who denounced him, especially Jacquier, were pro-conciliarist and promoted the reality of the sabbath.

Marine Ostorero combines the declarations made by the anonymous Carthusian of Val-Dieu with the official trial documents to round out some of the absent information from the partial copy of Adeline's case trial.⁸⁹ In his *Dialogus de diversarum religionum origine*, written after 1485, the anonymous Carthusian reports unedited elements on the content, as well as the context, of the case trial. This monk was born in Evreux where he joined the order under the bishop Guillaume de Flocques in 1447. Unmistakably, he was directly aware of the case, but it remains unclear if he witnessed it firsthand. He asked and procured from the "promotor of the faith" a copy of Adeline's confession, as well as the transcript of the trial, that he later copied and kept until he joined the Carthusian order.⁹⁰ As Ostorero points out, the anonymous Carthusian seems very reliable: he recopied the trial transcripts which he declares to have in hand.⁹¹ He adds the name of the "promotor of the faith" (Johannes Gravelle), which is absent from the official trial document, as well as the names of the inquisitor,

⁸⁹ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 654.

⁹⁰ Hansen, *Quellen*, p. 242.

⁹¹ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 654.

the “official” and the bishop, which all correspond to information provided in the official trial document. He explains that Adeline had confessed to more than thirty “erroneous” articles that were examined by doctors and masters of the faith and that Adeline had requested the support of the University of Caen in order to demonstrate that he was not a heretic. Faced with this demand, the bishop of Evreux, described by the anonymous Carthusian as “*vir bonus sed simplex*; a good man but simple”, then requested the opinion of the theologians of the University of Paris in order to establish the opposite, that Adeline was in fact a heretic. Another detail absent from the partial trial record that the Carthusian adds is that at the time of the sentencing, the bishop of Evreux declared his right to show mercy by condemning Adeline to perpetual prison, thus letting him live. However, the inquisitor present for the case had opposed this by saying that this sentence could not be confirmed without his consent or the consent of the general inquisitor of the province, Roland Le Cozic. There was probably some disagreement between the judges about how to effectively adjudicate this case. It is also surprising that Adeline was ultimately condemned to prison and not to the stake, making this case even more exceptional. What is clear is that Adeline’s trial was a means to censure in the most extreme way the heterodoxy of all the doctrinal errors contained in his alleged sermons by making an example of him through his condemnation as a demonic heretic. The Carthusian ends his report of the case by conveying that Adeline died in prison four years later in his dungeon when he was found with his hands in a position for prayer.

It is noteworthy that the anonymous Carthusian uses the term *scobaces* to designate those belonging to the demonic sect. Martine Ostorero remarks how this

made-up term, with no clear etymology, places the emphasis on how sorcerers were believed to travel to the satanic gatherings on canes or broom sticks and she points out the use of the term in the subtitle of the *Errores gazariorum: seu illorum qui scobam vel baculum equitare probantur* (*The Errors of the heretics: or those who travel riding a broom or a stick*).⁹² However, Adeline's trial transcript makes no mention of night flying. In fact, it precisely indicates that Adeline went to the "synagogue of the Waldensians" by foot, without the help of any other mode of transportation, let alone flying on a broom stick or a cane.⁹³ There was more than likely some resistance to acknowledge or believe in night flying, one of the most unrealistic aspects of the sabbath, though the origin of these doubts are not clear. Perhaps the judges of Evreux were worried to see their work judged by the theologians at the University of Paris, as Adeline had adhered to the canon *Episcopi* to exculpate himself from accusations of heresy. Beyond the problem concerning the silence of the sources in regard to what Adeline actually preached and said during his trial, this significant detail is relevant to the debate concerning night flying during the period when doubt progressively transformed into belief.

Adeline's case was evidently being discussed in Burgundy and in northern France. The anonymous author of the *Recollectio* concerning the witch hunt in Arras written around 1460, probably written by Jacques Du Bois, discusses the case of

⁹² Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 660.

⁹³ P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, "Guillaume Adeline" in *Witch Beliefs and Witch Trials in the Middle Ages, Documents and Readings*, p. 150: "The said Adeline confessed of his own free will, and not coerced thereto by being shown instruments of torture or in any other way, that on many occasions he went on foot, without the assistance of any kind of transport, to the most damnable 'synagogue of the Waldensians'".

Adeline with the sincere belief in the reality of the demonic witches of Arras.⁹⁴ The author of the *Recollectio* is convinced of the reality of the sabbath and of the existence of a demonic sect. Like Jacquier, the author gives evidence of this and then proceeds to refute those who claim that the satanic gatherings is only the product of demonic dreams, in opposition to Adeline's claims. He criticizes the ignorance of those who oppose this claim and their inability to fully comprehend such a delicate matter. With these errors, says the author, they should fear excommunication. Furthermore, those who claim that the satanic gatherings and the demonic sect are only an illusion are probably devil worshippers themselves, echoing Jacquier and Mamoris. Then, the author cites the case of Guillaume Adeline to show how these demonic "congregations" do not solely include people of lowly conditions, those who have little instruction in matters of faith. The *Recollectio* tells us that demons greatly rejoice in the initiation of a new member from such an elevated and educated station, as shown by the case of Guillaume Adeline.⁹⁵ As opposed to Jacquier and Mamoris, this author does not situate the particulars of the case in their original context. As Ostorero suggests, perhaps this case had become known well enough to the point that its background did not need to be described.⁹⁶ Retaining only the general contours of this case also allowed it to be adapted for universal usage, thus preventing it from being made vulnerable to being disputed or contradicted with the specific events that made this case controversial.

⁹⁴ For the author of the *Recollectio* see Frank Mercier, *La Vauderie d'Arras*, pp. 31-34 and pp. 64-67. For the text of the *Recollectio*, see Andrew Colin Gow, Robert B. Desjardins, and François V. Pageau (eds.), *The Arras Witch Treatises: Johannes Tinctor's Invectives contre la secte de vauderie and the Recollectio casus, status et condicionis Valdensium ydolatrarum by the Anonymous of Arras (1460)* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), pp. 8-11; and Hansen, *Quellen*, pp. 149-183.

⁹⁵ Hansen, *Quellen*, p. 174.

⁹⁶ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 660.

Evidently, the case of Guillaume Adeline is a practical example of the fifteenth-century's demonological debate in France which fits in perfectly into the general discussions concerning the existence of a demonic sect. On the side of those who promote the reality of the satanic gatherings, this case shows the extent to which demonic followers formed a perverse anti-Christian cult, made dangerous by its clandestine operations, further supported by false preachers who actively work to throw off the authorities by spreading doubt. Faced with such threats, how better to justify Adeline's persecution? Moreover, these discussions are not occurring in the closed space of doctrinal and philosophical arguments, or in university classrooms. The assertions made by these authors had real judicial consequences: Adeline ended up in the dungeon and convicted sorcerers were being executed and burned. Adeline was a real and tangible man who openly opposed scholastic arguments on the material reality of the devil and witchcraft. The reality of the satanic gatherings was a work in progress and its doctrine did not become totally credible through one single case. Its proponents had to work on several fronts because it was not enough to simply burn practitioners of magic in order to convince everyone, especially those who controlled the judicial mechanisms. Argumentation based on clear evidence was needed on the one hand, and on the other, preachers and dissenters who voiced the opposite opinion needed to be discredited, and what better way than by accusing them of being followers of Satan.

The story of Guillaume Adeline thus entered the demonological knowledge of the fifteenth and sixteenth century and it was up to each author to use it as they saw fit. For Jacquier and Mamoris, there was now undeniable and clear-cut evidence that demons were actively corrupting the Church at its highest levels. The insidious

consequences of Adeline's preaching on the non-existence of the satanic gatherings and of its deceiving effect on ordinary people corresponded precisely with and confirmed the demonological notion that there really was a demonic anti-Christian conspiracy of demonic sorcerers. For these authors, beyond the unquestionable obligation to repress demonic sorcery, a new battleground needed to be exposed and announced to all, before true believers found themselves outflanked. Informed by Adeline's case, the refutation of the canon *Episcopi* was essentially drawing a line in the sand. The refutation presumed the existence of two opposing groups squaring off: the demonologists who promote the reality of the satanic gatherings against those who deny it, either because of their ignorance or because they themselves belonged to the demonic sect and had made a pact with the devil. Thus, is revealed the demonologists' logic of combat. Denying the material reality of demonic sect could be used as evidence that individual belonged to the demonic conspiracy.

As Martine Ostorero has shown, the example of Adeline demonstrates that an environment favourable to the reality of the sabbath does not constitute a deterministic cause in predicting the use of the justice system to prosecute dissenting voices. In other words, it could sometimes be dangerous to voice skepticism, and in other contexts this did not lead to criminal accusations.⁹⁷ For instance, divergent positions could be expressed in universities without judicial consequences, or during criminal proceedings when providing judicial consultations. During Adeline's judicial prosecution, the theologians of both the University of Paris and of the University of Caen were consulted and probably provided opinions in opposition of each other since they were each called

⁹⁷ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 665.

on to support the validity of the accusation (Paris) or else to refute it (Caen). The debate could also be expressed in works of literature. In 1440, the discussion on witchcraft in the *Champion des dames* by Martin Le Franc gives positions *for* and *against* by intellectuals of the period.⁹⁸ However, the proposition of the ‘illusory sabbath’ could not be held openly, in sermons for example, or within an inquisitorial context where inquisitors were actively pursuing religious deviants.

The dangers of disturbing the work of inquisitors are expressed in Jacquier’s reaction to this case. Jacquier’s visceral reaction to Adeline’s case is better understood when the wider work of Jacquier as an inquisitor and his participation at the Council of Basel are considered. Matthew Champion’s analysis of Nicolas Jacquier’s *Flagellum* argues that this work can only be understood fully in the “cultural context” of the late Middle Ages.⁹⁹ Jacquier was a conciliarist and was incorporated into the Council of Basel in 1433 as a Dominican from Dijon.¹⁰⁰ He was active for several years at the Council and was involved in its prosecution of Pope Eugenius IV for heresy and voted for the pope to be deposed. Jacquier is referenced twice as brother Nicolai, a Burgundian Dominican, in Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (later Pope Pius II)’s work *De gestis concilii Basiliensis commentariorum*, which discusses Eugenius’s heresy.¹⁰¹ Out of seven resolutions that were debated, the first three passed by the members of the Council concerned the supremacy of the council over the pope. This principle constituted the

⁹⁸ Martin Franc, “Le champion des dames”, in *L’imaginaire du sabbat*, pp. 439-508.

⁹⁹ Matthew Champion, “Scourging the Temple of God: Towards an Understanding of Nicolas Jacquier’s *Flagellum haereticorum fascinariorum* (1458)”, *Parergon*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2011), pp. 1-24.

¹⁰⁰ H. Dannenbauer et al. (eds), *Concilium Basiliense: Studien und Quellen zur Geschichte des Concils von Basel*, 8 vols (Basel: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1896–1936), ii, p. 316. On Jacquier at the Council, see also *Concilium Basiliense*, vi, pp. 475, 498, 503.

¹⁰¹ Aeneas Sylvius Piccolominus, *De gestis concilii Basiliensis commentariorum*, Denys Hay and W. K. Smith (eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 16–17, and pp. 94–95.

justification on which the specific charges of heresy against Eugenius were validated.¹⁰² ‘Brother Nicolai’ is specifically mentioned in Aeneas’s commentary as being involved in four resolutions concerning Eugenius’s heresy. The *Concilium Basiliense* mentions Jacquier a few other times as a council member dealing with other matters of Church policy¹⁰³

In 1452, Nicolas Jacquier traveled to the region of Saint Galmier outside of Lyon, the same region where Adeline was allegedly preaching on the illusion of the sabbath. Ostorero suggests that it is very possible that they ran into each other there.¹⁰⁴ Jacquier’s task as vice inquisitor of Lyon was to investigate a report of women possessed by demons. The women were reportedly exhibiting violent and irrational behaviour, speaking in voices that were not their own, in a very low and loud tone. Exceptionally, they spoke of and revealed things that they were not supposed to know. These women were unable to withstand any contact with the sacraments of the Church and unable to tolerate the sight of the Eucharist. These observable corporal manifestations were all classic signs of demonic possession where one or more demons had invaded these women’s bodies.

The possessed women were subjected to the ritual of exorcism in which inquisitors had a professional interest because its successful outcome ultimately validated the religious truth of their work. Successful exorcisms validated the efficacy of

¹⁰² Piccolominus, *De gestis concilii Basiliensis*, p. 475.

¹⁰³ Jacquier is mentioned in matters concerning proposals related to the mediation by kings and princes between the Council and the Pope: *Concilium Basiliense*, p. 475. He is mentioned in the deposition process of Pope Eugenius dated 16 June 1439: *Concilium Basiliense*, pp. 498-503. On May 7, 1440, he was made representative of the deputation of faith: *Concilium Basiliense*, pp. 115–16. Jacquier protested the levy of a tenth of all ecclesiastical benefices, see Jacquier’s *Flagellum* in Annex 5 in Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, pp. 539–540.

¹⁰⁴ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 658.

the sacraments and the Host, and their narratives could be used as *exempla* to reinforce the content of sermons promoting the divinity of the sacraments. If demons, through the behaviour of the possessed women, were reacting violently to the Eucharist, it proved that the Host was indeed endowed with the ‘real presence’ of Christ, which heretics denied. The women were brought to the church where priests ordered the demons to leave the women’s bodies. Prayers were recited, saints were invoked, and consecrated holy water was sprinkled to this end. Over the course of many days, special masses were held and for many following Sundays, the region’s population marched in processions, reciting prayers, singing and ringing bells. After these exhaustive preparations, the exorcist priests invoked the name of God, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and ordered the demons to answer their questions: why and how did they take possession of these women? To what end? Forced by the superior power of God’s ministers and by these holy rituals, the demons answered their questions and through the mouth of their victims revealed a great many details concerning the “the execrable sect, of their heresy and of the harm perpetrated by their followers”.¹⁰⁵

According to Jacquier, the possessed women of Saint-Galmier were successfully exorcised of their demons. Jacquier seems less concerned with these possessed women than with the actions of Adeline who was in Saint-Galmier that same year preaching to the people not to believe in the satanic gatherings. The account of Jacquier’s encounter with the possessed women of Saint Galmier is found in his *De calcatione daemonum*,¹⁰⁶ his brief treaty on exorcism which provided instructions on how to repel demons,

¹⁰⁵ “ (...) exsercrabilem sectam et heresim eiusdem cultores ac eorum maleficia”. See Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, Annexe 5, p. 746.

¹⁰⁶ For the text, See Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, Annexe 5, pp. 746-751.

written a year before his *Flagellum hereticorum faciariorum*, an expanded work written not only to get rid of demons, but more importantly, to promote the reality of the heretical sect of devil-worshippers who make pacts with them. *De calcatione*'s account of the possessed women concentrates the many fluid components of late medieval beliefs in demonic sorcery (exorcism and inquisition, possession and magic, preaching and heresy), and exposes the problem caused by the recently discovered satanic gatherings.¹⁰⁷

The women of Saint-Galmier are not represented as witches, but as victims of possession. The ritual of exorcism is first used to free them, but the exorcism serves more importantly as an example and takes on a narrative function in order to make the demons speak. The demons were in turn forced by God through the power of the Church to respond to its ministers and thus to reveal the truth behind the secret operations of the sect of demonic sorcerers. The demoniac victims proved the existence of a diabolical sect. For Jacquier, the demons' responses confirmed the reality of the satanic gatherings, in the sense that it is ultimately God who is speaking through the mouth of the possessed women: God chooses to reveal this truth on the sects of heretics and the works of sorcerers to convince those who do not believe them. Thus, the story of the possessed women becomes an *exemplum* and an instrument of propaganda in the battle against demonic sorcery.¹⁰⁸ Tracing Jacquier's work as an inquisitor and his political affiliation as a conciliarist provides a context for understanding his hostile position against Adeline's alleged preaching.

¹⁰⁷ Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Florence Chave-Mahir, *L'exorcisme des possédés dans l'Eglise d'Occident (Xe-XIVe siècle)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011). The account of the possessed women of Saint-Galmier in 1452 echoes many *exempla* concerning demonic possession which reveal divine secrets as analyzed by Chave-Mahir.

As will be discussed in chapter 6 of this thesis, for Catholic preachers, the instrumentalization of cases of demonic possession became an even more effective means to validate Catholic doctrines during the sixteenth century. The confessional conflicts provoked by the Protestant Reformation parallel the conflict between the pro and anti-conciliarist factions during the fifteenth century. In many ways, the Reformation was a continuation, an extension and an expansion of the internal religious reforms proposed by the conciliarist movement in the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁹ Jacquier's utilization of the women possessed by demons in 1452 to demonstrate the reality of the satanic gatherings, all the while validating Catholic sacraments, was an extremely convincing method of conveying his religious message. Moreover, in the same way that Vincent Ferrer had solidified his belief in the birth of the Antichrist in 1403 based on the words of possessed individuals, the utterances attributed to the demons possessing the women of Saint-Galmier in 1452 provided material evidence for Jacquier's case concerning the reality of demonic heresy, and in the same blow discredited a dangerous anti-conciliarist and anti-sabbath adversary in the form of Adeline.

3.4 – The Inquisition of Arras and the Definition of Witchcraft in Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum*

The merging of heresy and demonic magic, fused by the notion of devil worship, continued to emerge in clusters of trials throughout the fifteenth century. From 1459 to 1461, the famous witch hunt of Arras, in the duchy of Burgundy, was sparked by the arrest of a heretical hermit. The episode began ordinarily outside the city in Langer,

¹⁰⁹ Mark Greengrass, *Christendom Destroyed: Europe 1517-1648* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), "Introduction", p. xxviii.

when a Dominican inquisitor, Pierre le Broussard, determined that a hermit named Robert de Vaux, who might have been a kind of soothsayer, was guilty of practicing witchcraft. The inquisitor accused him of heresy and the practice of illicit magic using the term ‘vaudrie’, a dual meaning term to designate both Waldensian heretics and sorcerers.¹¹⁰ During his interrogation under torture, the hermit produced the names of two other accomplices, who then denounced other accomplices, a process which kept multiplying the accusations. The hermit gave the names of two socially marginal people: a thirty-year-old woman named Deniselle and a forty-year-old man named Jean Lavite. Deniselle was known for procuring charms for clients that patronized her and Jean Lavite supported himself by selling paintings and poems on the theme of the Virgin Mary. The ecclesiastical judicial machinery then took over on the basis that the crimes involved heresy and religious deviance. Pierre Le Broussard was joined by two other Dominican inquisitors, Jacques du Clerc, a Doctor of Theology and Jean de Beyrouth. They interrogated the two suspects under torture which then produced more suspects for the inquisitors to question. Determined to root out the demonic conspiracy, Broussard’s interrogations produced a total of 29 accusations of witchcraft between 1459 and 1461 in three waves of arrests, in all 10 woman and 19 men, which resulted in 12 executions, 8 of them women. Several people fled the city before they could be arrested when their names were brought up in the interrogations, and one of the accused managed to escape from jail. When some of the wealthy and powerful citizens of the city, including a lord, became implicated in the demonic conspiracy, appeals were made to Phillip the Good, duke of Burgundy. Several of the appeals were successful, thus calming the anxious

¹¹⁰ Frank Mercier, *La Vaudrie d’Arras: Une chasse aux sorcières à l’automne du Moyen Âge* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006), p. 225.

mood in Arras and popular opinion turned against the inquisitors. In 1461, those sentenced to prison who remained alive appealed their convictions to the Parlement of Paris. In 1491, over thirty years later, the appellants received a favourable judgement. However, by then, only one of the accused remained alive.¹¹¹ The Parlement judged in favour of the appellants based on procedural errors that occurred during the trials, thus not contradicting the validity of accusations of demonic heresy.¹¹²

Frank Mercier's analysis of the witch hunt of Arras shows that the interrogations of the suspects were brutal.¹¹³ Some inquisitors voiced concerns about the way the trials were unfolding, but Broussard and the dean of the cathedral, Jacques du Bois, now in the company of the under-bishop, the Franciscan Jean Fauconnier, forced the procedures to continue.¹¹⁴ Deniselle and Lavite's confessions conformed to the inquisitors' perception of demonic heresy, saying that they both knew each other from their attendance at the satanic gatherings. They would rub unguents on sticks which they used to fly to reach the 'vaudrie' gatherings where the devil awaited them. The devil took the form of a horned goat and presided over the satanic ceremonies, which began with members paying homage to him by performing the obscene kiss. They would prove their allegiance by performing profane acts, such as stomping and spitting on a cross and showing their behinds to the sky and shouting insults to God. The attendees would then eat, drink, dance and copulate together and with demons. The content of these confessions describing the rituals at the gatherings was delivered in the first of a series

¹¹¹ Mercier, *La Vaudrie d'Arras*, pp. 330-340.

¹¹² Gordon A. Signer, "Arras", in Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, p. 59.

¹¹³ Mercier, *La Vaudrie d'Arras*, p. 261.

¹¹⁴ Mercier, *La Vaudrie d'Arras*, p. 320.

of sermons by the Dominican inquisitor Le Broussard at the beginning of the public trials on May 9, 1460:¹¹⁵

And they gave him [the devil] their soul and at least a piece of their body. Then they kissed the devil in the form of a goat on the behind, that is to say, on the ass, with burning candles in their hands. After this homage, they stomped on the cross and spat their saliva on it, then showed their ass toward the sky and the firmament. After they had all drunk and eaten, they would have carnal relations all together, and even the devil would take the form of a man or a woman. And they would have relations, the men with the devil in the form of a woman and the devil in the form of a man with the women. They would also then commit the sin of sodomy and buggery and so many other crimes so very foul and enormous as much against God as against nature, that the aforementioned inquisitor said that he would not name them. In their assemblies the devil preached and defended them from going to church, to hear the mass and to take holy water; and if they took some to show they were Christians, that they say “may this not displease my master”, and that they do not go to confession.¹¹⁶

The witch hunt of Arras produced public sermons and the writing of chronicles detailing the events of the trials as well as the content of the confessions of the accused, providing arguments for the existence of a demonic conspiracy. The witch hunt of Arras was also the catalyst for clusters of trials in 1460 in nearby Tournai, Douai and Cambrai.¹¹⁷

In the fifteenth century, the progressive construction of a demonizing discourse that helped to create the stereotype of the devil-worshipping sorcery culminated in 1486 with the publication of the infamous *Hammer of the Witches*, or the *Malleus Maleficarum*. The Dominican inquisitor, Heinrich Kramer (c.1430-1505), authored this very influential treatise after his inquisitorial work against demonic sorcerers in

¹¹⁵ Gow, *The Arras witch treatises*, p. 2. As mentioned, the dean of the cathedral of Arras, Jacques du Bois, probably wrote the *Recollectio*.

¹¹⁶ Jacques du Clercq, *Mémoires de J. Du Clercq*, vol.3, (Paris: Lacrosse, 1823), pp. 21-22.

¹¹⁷ Signer, “Arras”, p. 59 and Muchembled, *Une histoire du diable* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p. 59.

Innsbruck, Germany, in 1485, ended very badly for him. Complaints concerning the procedures used by Kramer were made to the bishop by the families of the accused, the local clergy and the secular authorities. The bishop had the matter investigated, put an end to Kramer's inquisition by letting the prosecutions lapse.¹¹⁸ It was not the first time Kramer was accused of illegal and unethical conduct. As mentioned in chapter 1 above, in 1482, Pope Sixtus IV had Kramer arrested on charges of theft and fraud. Kramer then authored a scathing rebuttal of conciliarism to demonstrate his orthodoxy and exculpate himself from the criminal charges.¹¹⁹ Witch hunting and the demonization of women who practice illicit forms of magic furthered his commitment to orthodoxy probably in an effort to deflect any more accusations of misconduct. The bull *Summis desirantes affectibus* was issued in 1484 to grant Kramer permission to conduct inquisitorial investigations into heretical practices involving magic. Kramer included this document in the published version of the *Malleus* to give the impression that the ideas articulated in his treatise had been approved by the pope.¹²⁰ The impact of the *Malleus* has been emphasized as having solidified the connection between magical practices and devil worship – witchcraft was perceived as a satanic cult practiced on a large scale and in an organized fashion. Moreover, the specific description in the *Malleus* of those who practice the magical arts taught by demons had the profound effect of gendering the practice of witchcraft. Tamar Herzig argues that “Kramer's presentation of (female) witches and (male) heretics as distinct groups that partake in the devil's conspiracy to

¹¹⁸ Christopher S. Mackay, *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁹ Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft*, pp. 42-44, citing Eric Wilson, “The Text and Context of the Malleus Maleficarum (1487),” Ph.D. Diss. (Cambridge University, 1991), pp. 71–6.

¹²⁰ Maxwell-Stuart, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, p. 25.

undermine Christendom marked an important turning point in demonological discourse”.¹²¹ Kramer portrayed women as being intellectually and physically inferior and as having an unquenchable sexual appetite which made them all the more vulnerable to the deceptions and sexual seductions of the devil. Once corrupted, female witches performed harmful curses to undermine the religious integrity of the community. In Kramer’s view, to be culpable of heresy, an intellectual crime, required a necessary level of religious understanding that was deficient in women, which prompted Kramer to describe male heretics as those who teach and disseminate demonic doctrines. In the anti-heretical treatise *Sancta Romane ecclesie fidei*, Kramer demonizes male Waldensian heretics who deny the ‘real’ presence in the Eucharist and spread the “doctrines of the demons”.¹²² While in the *Malleus*, female witches are described as those who perform acts of desecration of the Eucharist in the context of satanic rituals:

Here, a sorceress took the Body of the Lord, and with a quick lowering of her head, as is the loathsome practice of women, she put her veil to her mouth and pushed the Body of the Lord out into the piece of cloth, wrapping it up. She placed it (by the Devil’s instructions) in a jar in which there was a toad and hid it in the ground in a barn near the granary of her house, along with very many other objects that she had added by which she was able to practice her acts of sorcery.¹²³

Kramer established separate gender roles to the followers of Satan. The repudiation of Catholic sacraments by male heretics was reinforced by female witches’ acts of desecration of these same sacraments. The direct heretical attacks against Catholic religious truth and the performance of sacrilegious acts at the witches’ sabbath

¹²¹ Tamar Herzig, “Flies, Heretics and the Gendering of Witchcraft”, *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2010), p. 53.

¹²² Herzig, “Flies, Heretics and the Gendering of Witchcraft”, p. 67.

¹²³ Mackay, *The Hammer of Witches*, p. 319.

were a means for preachers and demonologists to confirm the veracity of Catholic doctrines and rituals.¹²⁴ The preparation of liquids made from unbaptized babies, the demonic seduction of virgin girls and the desecration of the Eucharist were all used as evidence for the existence of an anti-Christian demonic conspiracy. In turn, the demonization of heretics and witches taught the faithful that these doctrines and rituals were instituted by God for the benefit of their salvation. Why else would the devil imitate these rituals and seek to destroy them?

An analysis of preaching against heresy and sorcery in the fifteenth century shows how the devil was instrumental in the politics of religion. It also shows that preachers, theologians and the clergy were taking positions on the reality of a demonic cult to validate the teachings and rituals of the Church. Sustaining the reality of demonic activity in all its variations – heresy, sorcery, magic, and superstition – all the while condemning it, reinforced religious truth. Anyone found to be in open contradiction of this all or nothing religious position could be painted as a traitorous heretic and as a devil-worshipper, as Guillaume Adeline found out.

The Council of Basel (1431-49) also helps to explain the surge in demonological theory. The components related to the notion of an underground demonic conspiracy emerged in the early fifteenth century, and were articulated and debated in literary works between 1430 – 1440, when the council was at the height of its influence. Moreover, demonological theory emerged from regions in proximity to the council. Richard Kieckhefer, Arno Borst, Andreas Blauert, and the group of researchers at Lausanne – Martine Ostorero, Kathrin Utz Tremp, Pierrette Paravy and Agostino

¹²⁴ Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 210.

Paravicini Bagliani – have demonstrated conclusively that beyond many traditional beliefs about the devil and sorcery that existed before the fifteenth century, the representation of the demonic sorcerer, characterized by the demonic pact through copulation, combined with their ability to fly by *transvection* in order to reach the satanic gatherings and put into action their heretical and conspiratorial agenda was beginning to merge together in the writing of a wide range of authors in south-eastern France, northern Italy and parts of Switzerland, including Basel, between 1430 and 1450.¹²⁵ Michael Bailey and Peter Edwards have analyzed the activities prior, during and after the council of Johannes Nider, Nicolas Jacquier, Martin Franc, and other witchcraft theorist to demonstrate that many of their ideas concerning witchcraft can be traced back to their time at the council.¹²⁶ The evidence of trials, demonological treatises and sermons all indicate that it was in the early fifteenth century, leading up to the opening of the Council of Basel, that levels of concern and numbers of prosecutions begin to rise significantly. In the first decade of the fifteenth century, the Dominican Vincent Ferrer traveled through southeastern France and western Switzerland preaching apocalyptic sermons against heretics and practitioners of magic, and trials for demonic

¹²⁵ Richard Kieckhefer, *Early European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300–1500*, (London, 1976); Arno Borst, “The Origins of the Witch-Craze in the Alps,” in Borst, *Medieval Worlds: Barbarians, Heretics, and Artists*, trans. Eric Hansen (Chicago, 1992), pp. 101 - 124; Andreas Blauert, *Frühe Hexenverfolgungen. Ketzer-, Zauberei- und Hexenprozesse des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg, 1989); Pierrette Paravy, “À propos de la genèse médiévale des chasses aux sorcières: Le traité de Claude Tholosan, Juge dauphinois (vers 1436)” in *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome. Moyen Age-Temps modernes* 91 (1979), pp. 333–379; Paravy, *De la chrétienté romaine*, pp. 771–905; Ostorero et al., *L’Imaginaire du sabbat*; Michael D. Bailey, “The Medieval Concept of the Witches’ Sabbath,” *Exemplaria* 8 (1996), pp. 419–439; Bailey, “From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 76 (2001) pp. 960–990; Bailey, *Battling Demons*; Summaries of the work of the Lausanne group in Georg Modestin and Kathrin Utz Tremp, eds., “Hexen, Herren und Richter: Die Verfolgung von Hexern und Hexen auf dem Gebiet der heutigen Schweiz am Ende des Mittelalters / Les sorcières, les seigneurs et les juges: La persecution des sorciers et des sorcières dans le territoire de la Suisse actuelle à la fin du Moyen Age,” *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 52 (2002), pp. 103–162.

¹²⁶ Bailey and Edward Peters, “A Sabbath of Demonologists: Basel, 1431-1440”, pp. 1375-1395.

witchcraft followed. The sermons of the notorious Franciscan preacher Bernardino of Siena, provoking witch trials in Rome in 1426 and Todi in 1428 at the same time that demonic sorcerers were being tried in the hundreds in Valais and spilling over into Dauphiné, indicate this rising concern, combined with the growing fears that those who practice demonic magic were not isolated cases, but constituted a major and corrupting threat within Christian communities.¹²⁷ This threat was being simultaneously constructed and fought by mendicant preachers who were confronted with ‘real’ non-conformist heretics on the one hand, and superstitious/non-Christian practices on the other. The conflation of both types of religious deviances produced the impression that heretics and practitioners of magic were part of a vast demonic conspiracy. Mendicant preachers were intermediaries and constituted the point of contact between the Church and ordinary people. As pointed out by Ronald Hutton, the cumulative evidence concerning the geography and the chronology of the first trials for demonic magic shows that it was in the precise regions where Dominican and Franciscan preachers were delivering demonizing sermons against heretics that the concept of a demonic conspiracy developed.¹²⁸ The apocalyptic sermons of Vincent Ferrer in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries portrayed the battle against heretics as a battle against the Antichrist, a model reproduced in the demonological literature which described the battle against demonic heretics as a battle against the devil. As will be

¹²⁷ Paravy, *De la chrétienté*, vol. 2, p. 904, notes the role Ferrer and other Dominican preachers played in early trials in Dauphiné. On Bernardino and early witch trials, see Franco Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons*, pp. 52–108. Johannes Nider did not explicitly discuss his concern with witchcraft with reference to Bernardino and Ferrer, but Nider was certainly aware of them and praised them: Vincent Ferrer in *Formicarius* Book 2. Ch. 1, pp. 130–35, and both Ferrer and Bernardino in *Formicarius* book 4. Ch. 9, pp. 311–12 in *L'imaginaire*.

¹²⁸ Hutton, *The Witch*, p. 173.

seen in the next chapter, the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century began as another attempt to reform the Catholic Church that was quickly viewed as an internal threat. In the process, it exacerbated the fears of a demonic conspiracy and further amplified the impression that Satan's minions were actively working to destroy Christianity. Catholic preachers insisted that the toleration of Protestant heretics would provoke God's wrath and the apocalypse. In the contexts of the confessional conflicts, the witch hunts were reignited on an even larger scale during the second half the sixteenth century. Catholic preachers defined the ensuing religious conflicts, the persecutions of Protestant heretics and the witch hunts of the sixteenth century as battles against the forces of Satan.

Chapter 4 – Catholic Sermons in Sixteenth-Century France: Preaching against Demonic Protestants

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, late medieval preachers developed a rhetorical strategy of demonizing heretical sects by emphasizing their rejection of Catholic sacraments, then framing this rejection as evidence of demonic agency. Exorcisms, using the power of the consecrated Host, had forced demons to reveal how they were in league with heretics and witches. Such narratives were disseminated as *exempla* in sermons and referenced in works of demonology. The contours of a coherent demonology were being defined by the middle of the fifteenth century. The reality of satanic witchcraft was validated through the demonizing discourse of mendicant preachers concerning the existence of ‘real’ heretical sects and the inherent demonic nature of popular magic. The most intense prosecutions against witches occurred in the heavily contested religious regions of the Alps, where inquisitors were pursuing Waldensian heretics and Dominican and Franciscan friars were preaching on the apocalypse and associating magical practices with the devil. The project of reforming the Church provoked the conciliarist dispute which provided a context for the mutual accusations of devil worship by those on both sides of the issue. The evidence shows that it was mostly pro-conciliarist mendicant friars who were promoting the notion of a secret conspiracy of heretical devil-worshippers. However, Pope Eugenius IV was also instructing inquisitors to pursue more aggressively practitioners of magic and invokers of demons, probably to demonstrate his orthodoxy and deflect conciliarist demands. The Council of Basel, convened to settle the conciliarist dispute, allowed all these ideas to combine by gathering members of the clergy who exchanged their experiences and

further promoted the notion, in sermons and works of demonology, that the forces of Satan – heretics and witches – were part of a vast conspiracy working against Christianity.

In the sixteenth century, the Reformation intensified this notion even more.¹ With an established heresy/witchcraft-devil paradigm at their disposal, Catholic preachers exploited demonological ideas to paint Protestant heretics as the devil's minions. After the founding of the Order of the Society of Jesus in 1540, Jesuit preachers followed the strategy created by their Dominican predecessors to frame the battle against Protestantism as a battle against the devil.² This chapter will analyse how, in fact, French Catholic preachers had already been invoking divine punishments and demonic corruption in the first decades of the French Reformation in a strategy designed to attack Protestant ideas. Supporting this activity was the Council of Trent (1545-1563) which denounced Protestant doctrines as demonic.³ The violence during the French Wars of Religion (1562-1594), especially the Saint-Bartholomew's day Massacre (1572) and other popular massacres of French Calvinists have been linked with the demonizing discourse of Catholic preachers calling for the violent extermination of demonic

¹ Gary K. Waite, "Sixteenth Century Religious Reform and the Witch-Hunts," in Brian Levack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 485-506; Guy Bechtel, *La sorcière et l'Occident: La destruction de la sorcellerie en Europe, des origines aux grands bûchers* (Paris: Plon, 1997), p. 269; Brian P. Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 109; Marko Nenonen, "Culture Wars: State, Religion and Popular Culture in Europe, 1400-1800", in Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), p. 111.

² Jonathan Pearl, *Crime of Crimes: Demonology and Politics in France 1560-1620* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), p. 79; Rita Voltmer, "Jesuits" in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, p. 587.

³ Jeffery Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 50.

Huguenots.⁴ This pattern is reminiscent of the demonizing sermons delivered against the Cathars by mendicant friars in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, often leading to popular and military violence carried out during the Albigensian Crusade.⁵ This chapter will begin by exploring the historiographical interpretations of the French Reformation, with an emphasis on analyses that concern religious discourse and its social and political impact. Informed by Denis Crouzet's thesis linking a pervasive "conjuncture mentale eschatologique"⁶ with religious violence in sixteenth-century France, this chapter further analyses the sermons of the Parisian preacher Francois le Picart (1504-1556) during the first decades of the French Reformation. Le Picart's sermons illustrate the rhetorical strategies used by Catholics to associate Protestants with the devil, strategies established in the fifteenth century. It was crucial to accomplish this fundamental step prior to the deployment of religious violence. The next chapter will build on the process of demonizing Protestants in the first decades of the sixteenth century, explored in this chapter, by examining the practical outcomes of a rhetoric designed to provoke the violent extermination of demonic heretics after 1562.

4.1 – Reformation France: the Politics of Religion

Mack P. Holt argues in his *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* that the French civil wars "were fought primarily over the question of religion".⁷ This might seem like an obvious statement, but it departs from the dominant interpretations in the

⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence" in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), p. 160; Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-vers 1610)*, 2 vols. Tome 1 (Paris: Seyssel, 1990), p. 200.

⁵ Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade* (London: Faber, 1978), p. 121.

⁶ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de dieu*, Tome 1, p. 93.

⁷ Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p. 2.

historiography of the French Wars of Religion which had stressed political and socio-economic (if not Marxist) explanations. While he acknowledges the importance of these factors, Holt argues that the social experience of the conflicts was characterized by its religiosity. He therefore defines religion in sixteenth-century France as a “body of believers” rather than a “body of beliefs”, placing the emphasis on the social instead of the theological. This definition is key to reading Holt’s work because sixteenth-century people saw themselves as an entity united in a sacred community, Catholic or Protestant. Not only did each denomination perceive itself in those terms, but they each attempted to stamp out their opponents because of the threat they posed to their religious unity. Holt begins with a survey of Gallicanism – the link between the sovereignty of the French monarch and independence of the French Church – and the question of the choice of ordinary people to convert to Protestantism. Since the monarchy gained its legitimacy from religion, to sever oneself from the French Church was to question the monarch’s right to rule. Thus, the religious choice of the people had enormously important political ramifications concerning their loyalties and allegiances. Loyalty to the crown and religious confession were intrinsically linked through daily and aristocratic customs, official ceremonies, political oaths and shared beliefs. Alienating oneself from the French Church by choice was often perceived as treason because it was a rejection of all the sacred institutions that justified the sovereign’s legitimacy. Holt relies heavily on the social historiography of the French Reformation to explain why Protestantism was so successful in France.

The socio-historical studies of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Natalie Zemon Davis and David Rosenberg rely on statistical data for their analysis of the social make-up of

the Huguenot movement.⁸ French Protestantism was largely an urban phenomenon composed of adherents who were mostly literate. Le Roy Ladurie explains this trend by pointing to the emphasis of scripture in Protestantism. It was no surprise to the author that this religion would attract those who were literate, self-assertive and equipped to read and interpret the printed gospel.⁹ Holt points out that regional variations in the social and professional make-up of Protestant converts are problematic because they are not always representative of the kingdom as a whole. In Lyon, trades involving the new technology of printing, assertions of prestige (painters, jewellers and gold smiths) and newly established manufacturers of silk cloths were all overrepresented in the Protestant movement of the 1560s. Very few converts originated from older and less elaborate trades (butchers, bakers, vintners).¹⁰ However, in Amiens, it is suggested that Protestantism was not a movement of the independent literate middle classes, but a reactionary movement of an exploited and economically oppressed work force. David Rosenberg shows that the textile workers – especially the wool combers and weavers – of Amiens constituted the core of the Protestant movement in that city.¹¹ To reconcile inconsistencies in the economic background of the Reformed, Holt proposes analysing the “social and cultural determinants” which governed confessional choice among the various Protestant communities.¹² The textile workers of Amiens constituted a new

⁸ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974); Natalie Zemon Davis, "Strikes and Salvation at Lyon" in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 1-16.; David L. Rosenberg, "Social Experience and Religious Choice, a Case Study: The Protestants Weavers and Woolcombers of Amiens in the Sixteenth Century", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1978.

⁹ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans de Languedoc* (Paris: École pratique des hautes études, 1966), pp. 343-345.

¹⁰ Davis, "Strikes and Salvation at Lyon", pp. 1-16.

¹¹ Rosenberg, "Social Experience and Religious Choice", pp. 74-75.

¹² Holt, *French Wars of Religion*, p. 37.

industry – just as those more profitable trades in Lyon – and were not allowed by the local authorities to form into a corporate organization. Since they could not acquire the same corporate identity as other established artisans, they sought such an identity and hegemony in the Reformed religion.¹³

Besides urban identity politics, anticlericalism towards the Catholic clergy is another factor identified by historians of the Reformation that helps to explain some of the “social and cultural determinants” which encouraged conversions to the Reformed religion. Thierry Wanegffelen points out the Protestants’ insistence on the required qualities of clerics. The concept of the “good pastor” is described in the parable in Luke 15 in which the “good pastor” is watchful for the safeguarding and salvation of every lost sheep. Thus, above all, the “good priest” had to know how to correctly administer the sacraments, to preach what his audience must believe and how they need to behave in order to be saved, as well as provide an individual model to the faithful for a moral and holy life. This Protestant ideal helps to explain why condemnations of abuses committed by the clergy were sometimes so visceral and violent. If the Catholic clergy was behaving and being perceived as religious deviants, how could they safeguard the salvation of Christian believers? Perceived conflicts with this ideal could trigger attacks that were aimed against priests who were judged to be “deformed” and needed to be “Reformed”.¹⁴

Robert Scribner defines anticlericalism generally as a “political question” because expressions of anticlericalism were essentially “forms of public actions”.

¹³ Holt, *French Wars of Religion*, p. 37.

¹⁴ Thierry Wanegffelen, “La Renaissance et l’anticléricalisme: pertinence d’un dossier”, *Siècles*, no. 18 (2003), pp. 19-26.

Scribner provides a series of examples of perceived abuses by the Church highlighting how “anticlericalism can be understood as a reaction to the various powers wielded by the clergy”.¹⁵ However, his analysis of anticlerical actions in German cities during the Reformation emphasizes the complex nature of the relationship between the laity and the clergy. Tradesmen could sometimes side with the Church when it was to their economic benefit, because of tax exemptions, for example. There was also the fact that a great number of converted Protestant pastors were originally members of various monastic and mendicant orders of the Catholic Church. The internal contradictions within the Church itself – Catholic preachers who identified with and promoted evangelical reforms or priests who maintained sinful sexual relationships despite their apparent moral hypocrisy – drove both “an attack on the old church from within” as well as “what might be called an apocalyptic *Angst*”, an internal moral and religious form of divine dread among Catholic clergymen who could not resolve Church imperatives with their own views and behaviours. These institutional and individually moral contradictions could be resolved through the evangelical message by its rejection, from its own point of view, of arbitrary regulations and moral burdens.¹⁶

One of the fundamental outcomes of the Reformation was that it put into question the motivations and legitimacy of Catholic authority over the lives of the faithful. In Reformation France, this challenge also put into doubt the legitimacy of royal authority which was legitimized through Catholic religiosity. This division created two distinct and competing religious and civil cultures throughout France: those

¹⁵ Robert Scribner “Anticlericalism and the Cities” in Peter A Dykeman and Heiko Oberman (eds.), *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 151.

¹⁶ Scribner, “Anticlericalism and the Cities”, pp. 153-154.

who were Catholic and by extension loyal to the king, against those who had converted to the Reformed religion and perceived as heretics and traitors, and vice-versa, as both Catholics and Protestants mutually demonized each other.

What characterized the ensuing civil wars was a “clash of cultures”. Holt surveys the first three civil wars from a political perspective to explain why each successive peace treaty was unable to be maintained. But religious zeal was growing under the surface: “religious tensions between Protestant and Catholic cultures finally exploded in an extended fury of popular violence in the fourth civil war”.¹⁷ This chapter will examine the link between the religious discourse of preachers and popular violence.

4.2 – Religious Violence in Sixteenth-Century France: Historiographical Perspectives

The accumulated religious tensions released in the outbreak of the civil war in 1562 can be analyzed through the perspective of religious discourse during the first decades of the Reformation. Larissa Taylor’s *Soldiers of Christ* is a study of preachers in late medieval and Reformation France and constitutes a prime example of the trend of giving a more positive assessment of the Catholic Church on the eve of the Reformation and placing the attention on the laity in order to give more consideration to the Catholic religious culture of everyday people. She provides a more positive assessment of Catholic teachings and rituals during the medieval and early modern period by challenging the view that the Reformation was a natural response to a supposedly morally corrupt and psychologically oppressive Church.¹⁸ By contrasting Catholic sermons in France on the

¹⁷ Holt, *French Wars of Religion*, p. 75.

¹⁸ Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ: Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

eve and then during the Reformation, Taylor reassesses more than a few historical fallacies concerning the way Catholics have been portrayed during this period. First, she tackles the assumption that the pre-Reformation period had been characterized by a generalized religious sense of panic and that Catholic clerics had created an atmosphere of existential anguish by instilling the fear of hell and damnation in the minds of ordinary people. On the contrary, Taylor argues that Catholic preachers were more concerned with penitence and only evoked God's ultimate judgment and eschatology in this context because they wanted their listeners to know that even the worst of sinners could find salvation through God's love.¹⁹ Second, she revises the notion that preaching "from the Book" began with Luther. According to Taylor, this is a myth that was spread by contemporary Protestants as a way to attack and discredit the Catholic Church. The Bible was by far the most cited reference in Catholic sermons even before the Reformation.²⁰

Taylor finds that the major distinction between the content preached by Catholics and Protestants came from their different understanding of the "living Jesus" and the "post-Resurrection Jesus". Protestants focused on the divine nature of Jesus, while Catholics stressed his words and deeds. Taylor concludes that this divergence in emphasis concerning faith and/or works for salvation originated in the issue of "Paul vs. Jesus": "Protestants accused Catholics of being too concerned about ethics, while Catholics felt Protestants overlooked Jesus' teachings on earth".²¹ Although Catholics made many references to the epistles of Paul in the Bible, she argues that there was a

¹⁹ Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 101.

²⁰ Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 103.

²¹ Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 110.

significant difference in the way Protestants and Catholics made use of the Bible. While Catholics drew heavily on the teachings and examples of Jesus while he lived, Protestants emphasized the crucified Christ described by Paul the apostle. Taylor is clearly more sympathetic with the Catholic position in this dispute. This position becomes clear when she argues that more than Protestants, Catholics preachers recognized that people needed to understand God in more human terms and adapted the content of their sermons and their style of preaching to fulfill this need.²²

The sermons analyzed by Taylor suggest that the clergy often agreed with or played to popular criticisms of the Church and responded to calls for reform by heeding it: preachers “insisted on reform among both the clergy and the laity and a collective effort to ‘restore discipline, ritual and mores’ as the best way to respond”.²³ Taylor’s extensive study of 1,657 unpublished sermons did much to rectify the exaggerated view that Catholicism was in a state of decay and that the laity were completely ignorant of official religion.²⁴ In fact, instructing the laity was a major preoccupation of the Church during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Preaching friars of the mendicant orders,

²² Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 113.

²³ Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ*, p. 217.

²⁴ This thesis has been sustained by Jean Delumeau in his works on religious fear during the Reformation. Delumeau argues that the mass of the European population on the eve of the Reformation was only superficially Christianized and that most people remained virtually pagan by practicing a mixture of superstition and magic, and he thus defines medieval Christianity as ‘pagan and magical’. For Delumeau, the proliferation of new and popular forms of piety indicated a thirst of the Christian spirit of the masses but does not suggest the presence of a solid and structured faith among the faithful in the countryside. In fact, the Catholic clergy defined the suffering of ordinary people as either divine tests of faith or the work of Satan and demons. In Delumeau’s model, it was the dual effects of a psychologically oppressive Church and a craving for popular religious forms of expression that allowed the Reformation to occur. See *Le catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992) and *La peur en Occident* (Paris: Fayard, 1978). Valerie Flint has shown that some pagan magical elements were blended and integrated into Catholicism, which did not preclude ordinary people from being aware of official religious doctrines in the early Middle Ages; see her *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 390.

Dominicans and Franciscans, were invested in “purging Christendom of all laxity and ungodliness as part of the period of reform, which succeeded the Great Schism of rival popes that had riven the Western Church in the decades around 1400”.²⁵ As noted in the chapters above concerning the fifteenth century, it was during this period of reform that the stereotype of the demonic heretic and witch had taken shape. This stereotype was then widely propagated by Catholic preachers who used it as an example of extreme depravity in order to contrast it with moral Christian behaviours. Social cleansing was an important part of the agenda in projects of religious reforms.

Taylor’s perspective is contrasted by Denis Crouzet’s analysis of religious discourse in the sixteenth century. Among their examples, they both examine a famous French Catholic preacher, François le Picart (1504-1556). Le Picart preached in Paris during the first decades of the French Reformation. He preached in the French capital and elsewhere from c.1525 until his death in 1556. There are two major and opposite interpretations concerning the impact of Le Picart’s sermons in the decades preceding the French Wars of Religion.

First, Denis Crouzet uses Le Picart’s sermons among a vast array of printed sources to support his main argument that religious violence throughout sixteenth-century France was based on a widespread popular perception of the “End of Times”. This apocalyptic view necessitated the purging and purifying of God’s enemies and constituted the foundation of the collective mentality of the period. Crouzet calls Le Picart a “preacher of panic”. He situates the preacher “at the heart of current eschatological thought”. For Crouzet, Le Picart was “a preacher of the violence of God

²⁵ Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), p. 174.

and of the End of Time” and the author sees the Old Testament as an inspiration in Le Picart’s rhetoric which only increased over time.²⁶ Crouzet’s assessment of Le Picart echoes the impression historians have expressed concerning Vincent Ferrer’s anti-heresy and apocalyptic sermons delivered in the fifteenth century. As shown in chapter 2, Ferrer had relied heavily on the Old Testament, especially Daniel 12, in order to sustain his belief that the Antichrist was operating in the world and that the apocalypse was imminent.

On the other hand, Larissa Taylor analyses François le Picart’s sermons at length in the context of the first decades of the French Reformation in her monograph *Heresy and Orthodoxy in Sixteenth-Century Paris: François Le Picart and the Beginnings of the Catholic Reformation*.²⁷ However, she disagrees with Crouzet on some fundamental questions concerning the impact of Le Picart’s sermons on French *mentalité* during the early Reformation. She questions whether a close reading of Le Picart’s sermons, the only extensive corpus of printed French sermons for the second quarter of the sixteenth century (1525-1556), supports Crouzet’s “bold thesis”.²⁸ Taylor’s main argument is that Le Picart was an effective opponent of Reformed Protestantism as well as the most popular preacher in Paris, but that he was also one of the founders of the Catholic reform movement in France. Taylor maintains that all his efforts were “critical in keeping Paris within the Catholic fold”.²⁹ However, her close reading of Le Picart’s three hundred posthumously printed sermons leads her to see a compassionate and

²⁶ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, pp. 206-208.

²⁷ Larissa J. Taylor, *Heresy and Orthodoxy in Sixteenth-Century Paris: François Le Picart and the Beginnings of the Catholic Reformation*, (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

²⁸ Taylor, preface in *Heresy and Orthodoxy*, p. xi

²⁹ Taylor, *Heresy and Orthodoxy*, p. 111.

comforting tone in his rhetoric rather than Crouzet's characterization of him as a "*prédicateur panique*".

To account for how people reacted to preaching, Larissa Taylor employs a social historical approach.³⁰ She argues that certain examples of behaviours demonstrate how people reacted to preachers as individuals and almost certainly to their sermons. In the context of religious hostility in sixteenth century in France, Catholic and Huguenot preachers sometimes used the pulpit to incite their listeners to violence against their enemies. To understand the impact of preaching on audiences, Taylor's methodology was twofold. First, it concentrated on reactions provoked by Catholic and Calvinist preachers, and second, it examined how crowd behaviours were directed at the preachers themselves. She combined the preachers' words with actions and behaviours recorded in contemporary sources (memoirs, chronicles, letters and criminal procedures) in order to understand the responses of people who attended sermons.³¹ With intensifying religious confrontations among heretical and orthodox groups throughout the period of the late Middle Ages and then after 1517, between Catholics and Protestants up to the beginning of the seventeenth century (c. 1615), an important reversal of roles took place between the instigators and recipients of religious violence. Prior to the sixteenth-century's Religious Wars, preachers often suffered persecution from political authorities, while after 1560-1562, it was kings, their supporters and sometimes ordinary people who became the victims of outspoken preachers, whether Catholic or Calvinist. Taylor explained this reversal of targets by relying on Natalie Zemon Davis's perspective: "For

³⁰ Larissa J. Taylor, "Dangerous Vocations: Preaching in France in the Late Middle Ages and Reformations", in Taylor (ed.), *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 91-92.

³¹ Taylor, "Dangerous Vocations", p. 91.

Catholic zealots, the extermination of the heretical ‘vermin’ promised the restoration of unity to the body social and the reinforcement of some of its traditional boundaries ... For Protestant zealots, the purging of the priestly ‘vermin’ promised the creation of a new kind of unity within the body social, the tighter because false gods and monkish sects would be purer too ...”.³² This chapter will draw on Davis’ ground breaking perspective concerning how confessional antagonisms were resolved through religious purification. By using a comparative discourse analysis, this chapter and the next will reveal much about the link between religious discourse and violence and how preachers influenced and motivated their audiences. The next chapter will examine religious violence after 1562 in light of the demonizing rhetoric in the first decades of Reformation France in the sixteenth century.

As noted above, Taylor maintains that Le Picart’s role as preacher had a fundamental impact on preventing Paris from becoming Protestant.³³ She argues that Le Picart, a Sorbonnist who befriended the early Jesuits who were part of the judicial and ecclesiastical elite of Paris, successfully opposed Reformed Protestantism, and was the most popular preacher in the capital, even though he was also one of the founders of the Catholic reform movement in France. His efforts at reform reflected concerns of the Church deliberated at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Problems concerning the improper conduct of bishops and the lack of instruction among the lower clergy were critical concerns in the internal attempts at reforming the French church, as well as stemming the tide of Protestantism. Bishops rarely resided at their diocese, and a great

³² Davis, “The Rites of Violence” p. 160.

³³ Taylor, *Heresy and Orthodoxy*, p. 111.

many of them openly maintained concubines and financially supported illegitimate children.

To deal with this problem, a national council of the French Church was announced by King Francis I and convened in 1551.³⁴ Bishops were ordered to live in their dioceses for six consecutive months and visit each of their parishes. First, bishops were to ensure the proper training of the lower clergy. Second, the doctrines of Lenten preachers were to be examined. Third, bishops were to identify and punish heretics.³⁵ Pope Julius III, who was attempting his own universal reforms of the Church through the Council of Trent, saw the king's move as a threat. The dispute between the king and the pope resulted in the Tridentine reforms not being officially adopted in France.³⁶ Taylor's argument concerning Le Picart's role in keeping Paris Catholic rests on his heavy involvement in various activities aimed at stopping the advance of Protestantism which reflected Tridentine concerns: drawing up articles of faith, censoring books, hearing denunciations, working to convert heretics, supervising their executions if they did not convert, and most of all through his preaching. Again, all these efforts were "critical in keeping Paris within the Catholic fold".³⁷ More broadly, by focusing on one individual more responsible in attempting to eradicate Protestant heresy between 1530-1550, Taylor has shown that Catholic reform actually began in the sixteenth century, which predates the formal introduction of Tridentine reforms in the seventeenth century as these were never officially accepted in the Kingdom of France in the sixteenth

³⁴ Marc Venard, "Une réforme gallicane? Le projet de concile national de 1551", *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, no. 67 (1981), p. 201.

³⁵ Taylor, *Heresy and Orthodoxy*, p. 154.

³⁶ Venard, "Une réforme gallicane?", p. 224.

³⁷ Taylor, *Heresy and Orthodoxy*, p. 111.

century. The Parlement of Paris and opponents of papal rights considered them to be an infringement on Gallican liberties. The monarchs Henri IV and Louis XIII refused to have the Tridentine decrees published. They were finally officially endorsed in 1615 when the French prelates in the Second Estate voted to accept the constitution of Catholic Reform.³⁸

Another essential part in Le Picart's agenda to stop the spread of heresy was the conversion of heretics. In conjunction with the first Jesuits, Le Picart endorsed the idea that the Catholic Church should take into account the practical effects of its actions on ordinary believers, in the sense that the doctrines of heretics were to be studied the better to extirpate their errors. Taylor explains that Le Picart resorted to executions only as a last alternative and her analysis leads her to the conclusion that: "Le Picart was by no means an 'average' preacher, but as the most popular preacher in Paris during these years, his influence on his hearers and other preachers was profound, making him the perfect subject for a study of Catholic religious beliefs and behaviours in Paris before 1556".³⁹ Taylor convincingly demonstrates the potential dramatic effects of sermons by showing how people reacted to them and that it was dangerous for confrontational preachers in sixteenth-century France to deliver polemical sermons that could provoke audiences with their sharp words.

As mentioned, Crouzet's analysis greatly contrasts with Taylor's perspective. In the decades leading up to the French Wars of Religion which broke out in 1562, Crouzet describes an atmosphere of intense anguish, with astrology, prophecy and eschatological

³⁸ R. Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 71.

³⁹ Larissa J. Taylor, "The Good Shepherd: Francois Le Picart (1504-56) and Preaching Reform from Within", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 28, no. 3 (Autumn 1997), p. 795.

fears dominating French life in the first half of the sixteenth century.⁴⁰ In 1990, Crouzet published *Les guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-vers 1610)*, profoundly altering the historiography of sixteenth-century France. John Hearsey McMillan Salmon called the book “revolutionary”.⁴¹ Barbara Diefendorf found this work to be both provocative and perplexing.⁴² For Mack Holt, there can be no doubt that Crouzet has “guaranteed that the history of the Wars of Religion can never again be explained ‘sans Dieu’.”⁴³ Mark Greengrass has called *Les guerriers de Dieu* “nothing less than a complete reinterpretation of the religious history of the French sixteenth century”. Greengrass surmises from Crouzet that there was a “violence mentale d’avant les violences” – a kind of psychological violence prior to the outbreak of violence.⁴⁴ William Monter comments that Crouzet’s “best and most original contributions, those which truly deserve a wider audience, probably lie in his sections on pre-1562 French astrology and eschatological prophecy.”⁴⁵ Thus, this analysis will take into account Crouzet’s crossing of traditional disciplinary boundaries, such as that between studies of the Reformation and witch-hunts and magic, as a model for its own approach to French sermons in the sixteenth century.

Crouzet’s focus on religious violence in sixteenth-century France as an outcome of a kind of mental religious violence and an extensive fear of God’s judgment is indeed

⁴⁰ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, Tome 1, p. 101.

⁴¹ J.H.M. Salmon, Review of Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, in *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 63 (1991), p.775.

⁴² Barbara Diefendorf, Review of Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 99, no. 1 (1994), p. 242.

⁴³ Mack Holt, “Putting Religion Back into the Wars of Religion”, *French Historical Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1993), p. 539.

⁴⁴ Mark Greengrass, “The Psychology of Religious Violence”, *French History*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1991), p. 558.

⁴⁵ William Monter, Review of Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1991), p. 558.

provocative, as Barbara Diefendorf points out. It reinterprets the motivations behind religious riots, massacres and the civil wars by expanding their spiritual, sacred and religious edges. It provides a deeper understanding of a world view and behaviours that modern readers could easily describe as primitive. Instead, we see a wider picture of an unsettling and unstable period when the French monarchy was attempting to maintain its authority in the face of widespread civil disobedience, transformations of religious identity and beliefs, and the practical effects of striving to please God. Thus, in his brilliant analysis of religious violence and its core foundations, Crouzet's book argues that in sixteenth-century France, "violence is history".⁴⁶ Crouzet asserts that the first half of the century was saturated by a sense of eschatological anguish: "a period haunted by the fear of God's impending judgement."⁴⁷ Crouzet's analysis is predicated on the notion that the violence which ripped apart the kingdom of France from 1562 to 1594 was drawn up prior to the first war of religion through an array of symbolic and rhetorical tools deployed by French Catholics. However, Crouzet's two large tomes have been criticized for some of their exaggerated claims. This is what Taylor proposed to nuance in her analysis of Le Picart's sermons, a revision of this doom-and-gloom mentality in sixteenth-century France. However, Crouzet's perspective concerning the power of apocalyptic preaching is supported by earlier examples of preachers such as Vincent Ferrer who delivered sermons in the first decades of the fifteenth century announcing the imminent arrival of the Antichrist. As argued in chapter 2, Ferrer's

⁴⁶ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, p. 53.

⁴⁷ As Barbara Diefendorf summarises Crouzet's description of the first decades of the sixteenth century in France, Review of *Les guerriers de Dieu*, p. 241.

apocalyptic rhetoric provided a model for religious reformers to continue to associate heretics with the devil and the Antichrist.

Crouzet disagrees with the anthropological and functionalist approaches of Janine Garrison-Estebe and Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie to the French Reformation. Crouzet agrees with Natalie Zemon Davis's conclusion that Le Roy Ladurie's anthropological approach ends up being reductionist. The main issue that Crouzet takes up with Le Roy Ladurie's explanation is that it relies on the reactionary impulse of a "collective unconscious", a problematic concept rejected by the psychoanalyst of religion René Girard because of its vagueness. Girard writes:

This impression [of religious commemorations of ritual sacrifice] perpetuates itself through religion and perhaps through all forms of culture. Therefore, it is not necessary, in order to understand it, to postulate some form of the unconscious, either individual or collective.⁴⁸ (...) To understand the ritual [of religious violence], it must be referred to things other than conscious or unconscious psychological motivations. Despite appearances, it has nothing to do with a gratuitous sadism; it is not oriented towards violence but towards order and tranquility.⁴⁹

Crouzet shows more regard for Natalie Zemon Davis's analysis, calling her overall explanation of ritual violence "remarkable".⁵⁰ Her famous article "Rites of Violence" shows exactly how French Catholics perceived their world as being divided between the sacred and profane, with the Huguenots polluting the former, thus requiring rites of purification:

Pollution was a dangerous thing to suffer in a community, from either Protestant or a Catholic point of view, for it would surely provoke the wrath of God. (...) It is not surprising then that so many acts of violence performed by Catholic and Protestant crowds have the character either

⁴⁸ René Girard, *La violence et le sacré* (Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1972), p. 134.

⁴⁹ Girard, *La violence et le sacré*, p. 188.

⁵⁰ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, Tome 1, p. 235

of rites of purification or of a paradoxical desecration, intended to cut down on uncleanness.⁵¹

Similarly, Crouzet attempts to get at the heart of French mentalité by approaching religion as culture. His main argument is that religious violence throughout the sixteenth century was based on a widespread popular perception of the “End of Times”. This apocalyptic perception necessitated the purging and purifying of God’s enemies and forms the foundation of the collective religious mentality of the period. Thus, Crouzet argues that it is this eschatological world view that more accurately explains religious violence rather than Davis’s collective rituals. Crouzet defines collective ritual violence as an outward expression of eschatological imperatives, rather than an end in itself: “In the violence, it is God’s Word that is accomplished, the prophetic mind becoming reality (...) the specificity of violence was above all sacral” and was sustained by a deep eschatological fear of God’s judgement, the devil and hell, all personified through religious antagonists.⁵² While both Crouzet and Davis emphasize the centrality of religion as culture in their overall approach, Crouzet’s explanation is less influenced by social theory than is Davis’s.

To understand Catholic violence, Crouzet postulates that its collective agency reveals a disconnection with ordinary time, with daily occasions, with regular communal traditions, a disconnection with everyday customs and the mundane world of politics. The rationality of this violence had nothing do to with modern notions of rationality. Rather, it was a kind of pure Reason, God’s Reason. To explain the religious violence with only socio-political and cultural factors ignores the violence’s mechanisms of

⁵¹ Davis, “Rites of violence”, p. 59.

⁵² Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, Tome 1, p. 235.

exclusion, of discrimination and of cruelty and would be equivalent to denying that it has an ontological relation to God. For Crouzet, religious violence cannot be explained adequately through the appropriation of social and political roles, but rather through the dispossession of the sacred.⁵³

What remains clear from Crouzet's analysis of printed sources is that it shows convincingly that, in the case of France, there was a much greater perception and dread of Judgement Day and the end of the world than historians had previously taken into account. However, historians of early modern Europe have pointed out the exaggerated nature of some of his claims. Mack Holt points out the similar "doom and gloom" mentality evoked in Jean Delumeau's work on fear during the Reformation. Holt goes on to say that Crouzet's book gives the impression that everyone in France was consumed by apocalyptic anguish "every waking minute of their lives". For Holt, Crouzet's approach draws a "one-dimensional picture" of sixteenth century mentality.⁵⁴

In a similar vein, William Monter finds that Crouzet's insistence on only a millenarian world view to explain violence in sixteenth-century France opens him up to objections by secular historians. Monter asks: "wasn't Renaissance France a remarkably violent place, even without religious stimuli?"⁵⁵ From his extensive research on the French judicial system in the sixteenth century, Monter points out that between 1523 and 1568, the Parlement of Paris alone investigated over 150 homicides per year and that the king sold over 200 pardons every year. For Monter, Crouzet's assertion that collective ritualistic violence was separate and distinct from ordinary interpersonal

⁵³ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, p. 235.

⁵⁴ Holt, "Putting Religion Back into the Wars of Religion", p. 535.

⁵⁵ William Monter, Review of Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, p. 557.

violence is unsatisfactory. Monter is certainly correct in saying that sixteenth-century France was a terribly violent place, even without religious stimuli. However, Monter's review is more concerned with pointing out certain inconsistencies in Crouzet's work than in refuting its main argument that religion and eschatological anguish were the main motivates behind collective violence. This observation can be applied to the vast majority of Crouzet's reviewers. The main objections concerning Crouzet's work are its "bloated" and "heavy handed" format, not the essential veracity of his central argument. Crouzet's insistence on apocalyptic anguish sheds light on one of the fundamental 'dimensions' of the religious transformations of the sixteenth century and is supported by a massive array of printed sources that all reference demonic corruption and the fear of Judgement Day in connection to the perceived threat of the Protestant Reformation.

Crouzet's findings are also confirmed in religious conflicts provoked by the Reformation occurring outside of France. In the 1530s, Martin Luther was writing and preaching on the active attacks of the devil and the impending apocalypse.⁵⁶ In 1533, Anabaptists in the German city of Münster gained formal control of the city through elections. Alarmed that the municipal authorities were now heretics who would trigger divine anger, the bishop laid siege to the city in 1534 demanding they relinquish its control back to Catholics. The situation escalated when the Anabaptist authorities refused and then defended the city with arms while preaching that the apocalypse could occur any day.⁵⁷ Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell's analysis of apocalyptic

⁵⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan, "Some uses of Apocalypse in the Magisterial Reformers" in C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (eds.), *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature: Patterns, Antecedents and Repercussions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 77.

⁵⁷ Gary K. Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions: Anabaptists and Witches in Reformation Europe* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2007), p. 21.

thought in late medieval and early modern Europe shows that the dread of Judgement Day increased even more during the Reformation: “Such expectations undoubtedly characterised the outlook of the whole of Protestant Europe in general, but they also influenced Catholic views in places such as Italy and France, especially during the Wars of Religion. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were in other words characterised by a general anxiety which found expression in, and was stimulated by, apocalyptic expectations and speculations.”⁵⁸

4.3 – François Le Picart: Eschatology, the Devil and the Huguenots

In order to test Crouzet’s theory, we will follow in this chapter a discourse analysis to explain how le Picart demonized Calvinist heretics through his sermons during the French Reformation and the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598). The next chapter will analyse the relationship between the demonizing rhetoric and the religious violence. While Taylor is most certainly correct that the tone in Le Picart’s sermons to his audience was “compassionate”, he deployed rhetorical tactics based on the fear of the apocalypse, hell and the devil to keep his listeners within the Catholic fold. He staunchly defended Catholic sacraments against the attacks of the Huguenots all the while promoting the worship of saints, an activity that Calvinists denounced as idolatry. Ultimately, Le Picart warned his audience members against the dangers of the new Reformed religion, a religion inspired by the devil.

⁵⁸ Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 51

Since few Catholic sermons survived for the period from 1535-1565, Taylor made use of Francois Le Picart's three hundred posthumously published sermons and evidence drawn from non-sermon sources to follow the outlines of response to pulpit rhetoric. For example, as Calvinism spread through France, its leaders John Calvin and Theodore Beza attacked Le Picart in their writings. Calvin called him "...completely devoid of brains [belonging] to a class of fanatics...little better than a madman" and a "crazy man out of his mind".⁵⁹ Almost no printed Calvinist sermons have survived from sixteenth-century France, probably because reformers did not share the same passion for publishing their sermons that was displayed by Catholics, since this would expose their authors and publishers to the risks of censorship, accusations of heresy and imprisonment, if not capital punishment.⁶⁰ Taylor's examples of responses to sermons illustrate how crowds and the political authorities could turn against preachers. Seditious

⁵⁹ On the "ridiculous" bishop of Clermont and François Le Picart: "The latter was not long ago deemed as ridiculous as a buffoon, and so libidinous, that he was wont to track out dens of infamy with the scent of a pointer, till he placed himself under the discipline of a notorious Parisian, Sosia. After this he became suddenly wise, if men can so easily be made wise by a lady of the school of Francis Picart. It is clear that the master is completely devoid of brains, belongs to the class of fanatics, and is little better than a madman." Jean Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmann, 1958), vol 3, pp. 33-34; "Maitre François Picquart docteur de Paris, criant à sa façon accoutumée comme un homme hors de sens, a bien osé dire, qu'à Genève on niait toute religion. Vrai est que c'est un écervelé et frénétique: mais il est de telle réputation entre les siens, que tout ce qu'il a gazouillé sera tenu comme si un ange aurait parlé." "Master François Picart doctor from Paris shouting in his usual way like a man out of his mind, dared to say that in Geneva we deny all religion. It is true that he is brainless and frantic, but his reputation among his own makes everything he chirps seem like an angel had spoken." *Des scandals qui empeschent aujourdhuy beaucoup de gens de venir à la pure doctrine de l'Évangile, & en desbauchent d'autres*, (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1550), p. 138. Théodore de Bèze wrote that although Le Picart was one the main pillars of the Catholic Church in France, he referred to him as a "choleric rabid [dog]". In reference to what makes a good doctor and the interpretation of scripture: "(...) un bon docteur, qui donne des interprétations conformes aux écritures, et tendant non à la gloire du pape, mais à celle de Dieu: quand même il ne serait ni (...) un enragé colérique, comme notre maître Picart (...); "(...)a good doctor provides interpretations in accordance to the scriptures and considers not the glory of the pope, but God's; even though he would not be a choleric rabid [dog], like our master Picart (...)". Théodore de Bèze, *Le passavant de Théodore de Bèze, Épitre de Maître Benoît passavant à Messire Pierre Lizet* (Paris: Isidore Liseux, 1875), p.188.

⁶⁰ Taylor, "Dangerous Vocations", p. 107.

preaching against royal policies concerning the treatment of Calvinists in France condemned several students of theology to imprisonment in 1533-1534 in response to their provocative rhetoric against the spread of the Reformed religion. François Le Picart was among those arrested because he had apparently accused the King of Navarre of heresy and had tried to instigate a riot.⁶¹ Pierre Siderander reported that “Le Picart and others...in their preaching attacked and insulted the king...confident of the authority of the Sorbonne. Next they tried to create a riot, and rouse the people so they would not put up with heresy”.⁶² He and the others were first imprisoned in the monastery of Sainte-Magloire, before Le Picart was exiled to a distance of no less than thirty leagues from Paris. One of his sermons against heresy provoked a man:

(...) who seem dazed and impatient in his rage ... [to try to] strangle the venerable doctor and excellent preacher, Master François Le Picart, while he was still preaching in the church of St.-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie in Paris. After trying to put his enterprise into effect, [the man] was stopped by the people gathered around the pulpit, who threw him out of the church and killed him in their anger.⁶³

A few background details of Le Picart can help shed some light on some of his methods and motivations. Le Picart was born in 1504, the third of fifteen children in a family of royal servants and *parlementaires*. His father, Jean le Picart was the Lord of Villon and d’Attily and worked as secretary to the king. Le Picart obtained his arts

⁶¹ Taylor, “Dangerous Vocations”, pp. 95-96.

⁶² A.-J. Herminjard, *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, Tome IV (1536-1539), (Paris: M. Lévy frères, 1886-1887), p. 446.

⁶³ “Un quidam des leurs comme il était étourdie et impatient en sa colère s’efforça d’étrangler le vénérable docteur et prêcheur d’excellence, maitre François Picart, lots qu’il était prêchant en l’Église Saint Jacques de la boucherie, à Pairs, et eut mit son entreprise en effet, n’eut, été qu’il fut empêché du peuple, qui était autour de la chair, qui le jeta hors de l’église et le tua en acommontion” Jean de la Vacquerie, *Remontrance adressé ay roy, au princes catholiques, et à touts Magistrats & Gouverneurs de Républiques, touchant l’abolition des troubles & émotions qui se sont aujourd’huy en France, causez par les hérésies qui y règnent & par la Chrétienté* (Paris: Jean Poupy, 1574), p. 43.

degree at the University of Paris and then began advanced theological studies at the illustrious college de Navarre, around 1522. He was ordained a priest in September 1526 by his cousin, François Poncher, bishop of Paris. Le Picart became notorious when he preached against Francis I's sister, Marguerite de Navarre and Gérard Roussel, a Catholic humanist who preached evangelical ideals.⁶⁴ During the king's absence from Paris, while visiting in Picardy during Lent of 1533, Marguerite de Navarre invited Gérard Roussel to preach his evangelical ideas at the Louvre. In response, the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris assigned a number of bachelors to preach against the new doctrines. According to the contemporary Oswald Myconius, Le Picart complained that "only little old ladies are coming to my sermons."⁶⁵ Pierre Siderander reported that Le Picart had accused the king of Navarre of heresy.⁶⁶ His role in the public attacks led to his arrest. In 1533, he was imprisoned in the monastery of Saint-Magloire and then ordered into exile for several months. He chose to stay in Reims where he had maternal relatives.⁶⁷ He returned to Paris the next year when his exile was lifted and received his doctorate in theology. That same year, 1534, the authorities in Paris became alarmed when Protestants began posting placards against the Eucharist and Catholic sacraments in the streets and on properties belonging to the crown, known as the Affair of the Placards. However, two years after his disgrace, he became the new royal *lecteur ordinis* on scripture. In 1548, he was made dean of Notre Dame and vicar of Cardinal Jean du

⁶⁴Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier; His Life, His Times: India, 1541-1544*, vol. I (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1973), p. 264.

⁶⁵ See A.-J. Herminhard, *Correspondance des Réformateurs dans les Pays de Langue Française*, (Geneva: H. George, 1870), vol. 3, p. 161.

⁶⁶ Herminhard, *Correspondance*, vol. 3, p. 55-56.

⁶⁷ Hilarion de Coste, *Le parfait ecclesiastique ou l'histoire de la vie et de la mort de François Le Picart, Seigneur d'Attily & de Villeron, docteur en théologie de Paris & doyen de Saint Germain de l'Auxerrois* (Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1658), p. 25.

Bellay, archbishop of Paris, and a year later he was appointed dean of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, in the royal parish.⁶⁸ Le Picart continued promoting Catholic truth at the expense of Protestants concerning their rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He gave a sermon in Meaux “to an almost infinite number of people” on the Holy Sacrament (i.e.: Eucharist) in 1546, the day after the executions of fourteen Calvinist heretics, which was also witnessed by “many other” heretics condemned to be banished:

Messieurs of the Court of the Parlement of Paris (...) in which they had great estimation for this great doctor, having chosen him and named him to be present at the execution of the heretics, who were punished at Meaux in the month of October of the year 1546. Those who were present at this exemplary execution of the *Sectarians* of Calvin, had the contentment to hear the learned sermon of the very saint sacrament of the altar that made *Monsieur Le Picart* by order of the Court of the Parlement, and where were found an almost infinite number of people (...) for the conservation of the Catholic Religion, to the great displeasure of the *Sectarians*.⁶⁹

François Le Picart’s sermons give us a sense of the Catholic rhetoric used to demonize Protestant heretics in the first decades of the French Reformation.

Undeniably, there is an explicit eschatological tone in le Picart’s sermons. In one of his sermons given for the second Sunday of Advent, Judgment Day is announced: no one can know with certainty the hour or the day of His arrival; however God has stated that

⁶⁸ De Coste, *Le parfait ecclésiastique*, pp. 172-173.

⁶⁹ De Coste, *Le parfait ecclésiastique*, pp. 171-172: “Messieurs de la Cour du Parlement de Paris (...) en quelle estime ils avaient ce grand Docteur, l’ayant choisi et nommé pour être présent à l’exécution des hérétiques, qui furent punis à Meaux au mois d’octobre 1546. Ceux qui étaient présent à cette punition exemplaire des Sectaires de Calvin, eurent le contentement d’ouïr le docte sermon du très-saint sacrement de l’autel, qui fit à Meaux monsieur Le Picart par ordre et ordonnance de la cour du Parlement, où il se trouva un nombre presque infini de peuple (...) pour la conservation de la religion catholique, au grand déplaisir des Sectaires”.

certain signs will precede it. Le Picart tells his audience that he sees these signs in the world around him; first, apostasy is everywhere:

(...) priests who marry, not that it is marriage, are incestuous and sacrilegious. This dissension, it is apostasy against the obedience of the Roman Church. There are many kingdoms which are disobedient to the Pope and the Holy See. Saint Paul said that when we forsake our faith in Jesus Christ and our acknowledgement of the Pope and of the Roman Church, it is a sign that Judgment Day approaches.⁷⁰

The second sign concerns the Antichrist being worshiped as if he was God:

There is a second sign given by Saint Paul: it is the Antichrist, who is said to be a man of sin, because he was conceived and born in sin. Just as our Lord Jesus Christ arrived by the conduit of the Holy Spirit (...) thus the Antichrist will take all his power from the devil in his nativity. The arrival of the Antichrist will be by the conduit of the devil, he will perform miracles: but they will be lies, only seeming, because they try to bring us to deception and perdition. (...) The Antichrist is everything contrary of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁷¹

Le Picart continues with apocalyptic predictions:

O Christians! It will be a pitiful and calamitous time. I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, however, according to our Lord through Saint Paul, we can see how much the day of Judgement approaches, because malice abounds more than ever, and charity is colder than ever. (...) It seems there is no God as we live. Christians, let us consider, because it will be too late after death.⁷²

⁷⁰ François Le Picart, *Les sermons et instructions chrestiennes pour tous les jours de l'Advent ... pour tous les dimanches & fêtes de l'année (...)*, vol. 1, (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1567), p. 53: "que les prêtres se marient, non pas que ce soit mariage: mais plutôt inceste et sacrilège. Cette dissension, c'est apostasier de l'obéissance de l'église Romaine. Il y a beaucoup de royaumes inobéissant au Pape, au saint siège apostolique. Saint Paul dit, quand on délaisse la foi de Jésus Christ, et à reconnaître le Pape et l'église Romaine, c'est un signe que le jugement approche".

⁷¹ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 53: Il y a encore un autre signe que Saint Paul baille: c'est l'Antéchrist, qui est dit homme de pêché, car il sera conçu et né en pêché. Comme notre seigneur Jésus Christ est venu par la conduite du saint esprit (...) ainsi l'Antéchrist prendra tout son pouvoir du diable, en sa nativité. La venue de l'Antéchrist sera par la conduite du diable, il fera des miracles: mais ils seront tous mensonges, car seulement seront apparents, parce qu'ils tendront à déceptions et perdition. (...) L'Antéchrist est tout contraire à notre Seigneur Jésus Christ".

⁷² Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 53: "O chrétiens! Ce sera un trépas piteux et calamiteux. Je ne suis ni prophète ni fils de prophète : mais selon ce qu'a prédit notre seigneur en Saint Paul, nous pouvons bien voire combien le jour du jugement approche, car malice abonde plus que jamais, et charité est plus froide que jamais ne fut. (...) Il semble qu'il n'y a point de Dieu comme nous vivons. Chrétiens, pensons y, car il ne sera pas temps après la mort".

Le Picart expands his argument on the apocalypse with a gruesome description of the terror that will be experienced by those who are damned: “The damned will see the good people rise to heaven to their confusion, and will then be ejected to hell”.⁷³ Le Picart implores his audience “for the love of God” to rethink the false promises of heretics and the ambition of amassing wealth and power when God has warned that these are all empty pursuits. Heresy and the pursuit of power negate Scripture and presume that God is a liar, which are sure means to find damnation. To avoid damnation, there are three things to fear. The first is God’s Judgment, second, that the soul fortifies the body (the doctrine of the immortality of the soul) and the third is hearing God’s verdict (spiritual guilt). On Judgement Day, all the angels of heaven will tremble, not by fear, but with the amazement and with the dread of witnessing so great a number of people condemned to damnation. Le Picart presents the fear of God’s Judgment as the best method to remain in God’s grace, to be redeemed and to avoid eternal damnation. He compares the fear of the coming apocalypse to the fear of a walled city being invaded by a foreign enemy.⁷⁴ The fear of God leads to redemption: the bodies of the damned will be resurrected, but their bodies will be more infected than all the pestilence in the world combined. The apocalypse is immanent and could occur at any moment: “we must live in a state in which we would want to die and be presented to God”.⁷⁵

⁷³ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 53 : “Les damnés verront monter les bienheureux au paradis à leur confusion et seront là-bas éjectés en enfer”.

⁷⁴ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 54.

⁷⁵ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 54: “Il faut donc vivre en l’état où nous voudrions mourir et être présenté à Dieu”.

Le Picart's rhetoric is clearly a warning, and as Crouzet points out, inspired by the Old Testament. A sermon for the second Thursday of Advent stresses that the last verdict is indeed near. This sermon explains that God permits humans to suffer in order to save them before the Final Judgement:

Noah had warned the people to repent, God will punish you. They were not concerned. While God endures the faults of men, He holds his sentence quasi-suspended, He says the spirit of man is forever but not the body, as if he wanted to say: until now, I hold my sentence suspended, to know if I should destroy mankind with the flood: but I will dispute it no longer, because I see they do not repent, I will pronounce the sentence.⁷⁶

While God's sentence has yet to be given, a solution still exists. Similarly, judges take great care in presiding over a trial and are able to show mercy to those who repent, but once the sentence is passed, then, it is too late. Le Picart gives his audience God's ultimatum and frames it in terms of a collective choice: "God is waiting for us to amend ourselves. When we do not amend ourselves, there is a danger that God will destroy everything".⁷⁷

Le Picart depicts the kingdom of France in a state of divine chastisement, directly following September 1544, when Henry VIII of England had taken the city of Boulogne. The preacher sees the loss of the city as a punishment and as a sign that God is displeased with France.⁷⁸ In His mercy, God bestowed peace to the French in the hope

⁷⁶ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 76: "Noé annonçait au peuple disant repentez-vous, Dieu vous punira. Ils ne s'en souciaient point. Cependant que Dieu endure de la faute des hommes, il tient sa sentence quasi-suspendu, il dit non pernebit spiritus meus in homine, comme s'il voulait dire jusqu'à maintenant, j'ai tenu ma sentence suspendus, pour savoir si je dois détruire les hommes par le déluge, mais je n'en disputerai plus, car je vois qu'ils ne se repentent point, je prononcerai la sentence".

⁷⁷ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 77: "Dieu attend que nous nous amendions. Quand on ne s'amende point, il y danger que Dieu détruise tout".

⁷⁸ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 77.

that they would amend their faults and reform themselves. Le Picart reiterates his call to do penance and to obey the laws laid out by God:

We begin with lavish lives, golden gilded [objects] and lasciviousness, it is the cause which provoked God to send the flood. Let us see how well sensuousness and lasciviousness are not now more frightening than [they] were from that time, are we not afraid that He will send the flood? There is a great danger that He will give His sentence, that He has long held suspended. This city of Paris is no more that the city of Jerusalem.⁷⁹

In the second sermon on the Octaves of Easter, Le Picart tells his audience in Paris that “we are worse than the people of Nineveh”.⁸⁰ Nineveh was a city in the classical period and the capital of the Assyrian Empire (c. 1300 B.C.), first mentioned in Genesis 10:11. The city was destroyed following an invasion (c. 612 B.C.). It was located outside Mosul in modern day Iraq. Ancient prophets are said to have predicted its destruction at the hands of God because of the excessive pride of the city’s inhabitants. Le Picart compares its destruction to the fate that awaits Paris if its people do not repent. Salvation can only be achieved when people fight their own corruption. Le Picart offers hope to his audience but fixed with an expiration date: “man can redeem himself while he is still in this world”.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 77: “On commence aux bombants, doreurs et lasciveté, c’est la cause qui a provoqué Dieu d’envoyer le déluge. Regardons bien si la volupté et la lasciveté n’est pas plus effrénée qu’elle n’était ce temps-là, craignons-nous pas qu’il envoie le déluge? Il y a danger que Dieu nous donne sa sentence qu’il a longtemps tenue suspendus. Cette ville de Paris n’est plus que la ville de Jérusalem”.

⁸⁰ François Le Picart, *Les sermons et instructions chrestiennes, pour tous les dimanches et toutes les festes des saints, depuis Pasques jusques à la Trinité, avec douze sermons du mesme autheur, touchant le Saint Sacrement de l’autel et les constitutions de l’Église catholique... fidèlement recueillis, ainsi qu’ils ont esté prononcez par feu... M. Maistre François Le Picart (...)* (Paris: N. Chesneau, 1565), p. 10: “Nous sommes pire que ceux de Ninive”.

⁸¹ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Pasques*, p. 327: “Il se peut bien se remettre pendant qu’il est encore dans ce monde vivant”.

In a sermon for the Epiphany,⁸² Francois Le Picart explains his theory of divine authority rooted in the Old Testament. The sermon is intended as a warning that those who turn away from God are sent to the devil. The preacher begins his sermon with an exhortation to his audience:

The Holy Spirit speaking through the royal prophet David calls on us and says Come! To whom? To God the creator, to our saviour Jesus. Come voluntarily: because if you do not come voluntarily, I assure you that you will come by force: and they must, the good and the bad, once in front of Him to give account of their lives and deeds, good and bad.⁸³

Le Picart continues with an account from the Book of Kings chronicled in the Old Testament.⁸⁴ These two *exempla* serve to contrast the conduct of a prideful and selfish king against that of another humble and God-fearing king, thus connecting religious truth with political legitimacy.

Le Picart begins with an account of king Ahaziah of Israel (reign c. 853 BC – 852 BC).⁸⁵ Ahaziah had fallen from a palace balcony and became bedridden from his injuries. He sent messengers to the temple of Baal in Ekron, the god of prophecy, to find out if he would heal. God then sent the hermit prophet Elijah to inform the king that he would not recover from his injuries because he worshiped a false pagan god. The king

⁸² “La fete des rois” or the “Three Kings’ Day”, known as the Epiphany, is celebrated January 6 and commemorates the formal introduction of infant Jesus to the Magi or the Gentiles.

⁸³ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 232: “Le Saint Esprit parlant par le Prophète royal David nous appelle et nous dit venez. A qui? A Dieu le créateur, à notre sauveur Jésus. Venez volontairement car si vous n’y venez volontairement, vous viendrez par force et il faut que bons et mauvais se trouvent une fois devant lui pour rendre compte de leur vie et œuvres bonnes et mauvaises”.

⁸⁴ The Book of Kings are two biblical books that are part of official Jewish and Christian canon. In the Jewish Bible, the books are part of a group of texts concerning prophecy including the books of Joshua and Samuel. In the Catholic Bible, the two books are part of historical texts. The Book of Kings serves as a theological explanation for the fall of the kingdom of Israel. See Marvin Alan Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (Lewisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), p. 639.

⁸⁵ Le Picart names the king *Ochosias* in his version of the story, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 2, p. 479. Ahaziah of Israel reigned the northern kingdom of Israel from there he reigned from Samaria (c. 850 B.C.).

twice sent groups of fifty soldiers to capture and kill Elijah, but God destroyed the soldiers in a storm of fire invoked by Elijah. A third group of fifty soldiers was spared and was commanded to return and inform the king that God's sentence would stand. As predicted, Ahaziah died never having left his bed.⁸⁶

Le Picart interprets this account for his audience. The fate of the king was the consequence of having abandoned God and by extension his subjects were also subject to divine punishment when they are complicit. Speaking for Elijah concerning the actions of the king, Le Picart asks: "what? Is there not the God of Israel: must he take refuge with an idol, a devil? And because the king your master placed his heart, his confidence and his hope in an idol, God says that from the bed where he lies never will he rise but will die there. Here is the punishment for abandoning God and turning to an idol, a creature".⁸⁷ Le Picart laments that it is a great pity when a prince is evil, and his spite becomes contagious to his people. If a king is an idolater, so are most of his people. If a king is accustomed to swearing and blaspheming, most of his people will also act in this manner. For the complicit actions of King Ahaziah's soldiers, God punished them with fire, the sentence given to heretics.

Le Picart tells the audience that if King Ahaziah was an idolater, it was because his mother Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, made him this way: "Yet see the danger of conversing with an evil person, with a heretic who is full of errors".⁸⁸ Idolaters and

⁸⁶ See II Kings 1:18.

⁸⁷ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 232: "Comment? N'y a-t-il pas le Dieu d'Israël, faut-il avoir refuge à un idole, à un diable? Et pour cela que le roi votre maitre a mis son cœur, sa confiance et espérance en un idole. Dieu dit que du lit où il est couché jamais ne te relèvera, mais mourra. Voilà la punition d'avoir délaissé Dieu et s'être tourné à un idole, à une créature".

⁸⁸ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 233: "Or voyez le danger que c'est que de converser avec un méchante personne, avec un hérétique qui est plein d'erreurs".

heretics are obstinate and impertinent in their evil opinions, and they will receive the greatest of possible damnations. Le Picart is horrified that a king would turn to a “creature” before turning to the “Creator” for deliverance of his illness. The preacher explains how even doctors dare not touch a patient before they clear their conscience and confess their sins. The same applies to people who first seek the help of others before turning to God: “we are often like King Ahaziah, who was sent to the devil for his sickness. And many in their need and affairs send for soothsayers and sorcerers to heal them.”⁸⁹ In no uncertain terms, sending for soothsayers and witches is calling on the devil for help. Witches accomplish nothing but what the devil teaches them. Being healed by witches is actually a kind of punishment, a consequence of their evil intentions. God sees the evil in people who wish to consort with demons, and in those who allow demons to speak through idols. When a soothsayer answers questions concerning the future or when a person is healed by a witch, it is really the devil who accomplishes these actions, a process which ultimately corrupts and condemns that patient by keeping them in a state of ignorance, error and heresy.⁹⁰ This sermon’s central message is to not abandon God. The progression of the demonstration conflates many elements that go from biblical *exempla* to doctrines – idolatry and heresy, and demonism and witchcraft. Le Picart goes from heresy (idolatry) to demonic corruption (sent to the devil) and then makes an oblique reference to demonic witches, distinguished from heretics, all to give examples of activities that go against his central message not to abandon God. How did the audience understand this message? Le Picart’s rhetoric blurred the definitions of demonic heretics and demonic witches.

⁸⁹ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 233.

⁹⁰ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 233.

The second account is a counterexample and concerns king Hezekiah of Judah (c.739 B.C. – 687 B.C.).⁹¹ When Hezekiah became mortally ill, he turned to God for deliverance. According to II Kings 20:1, the prophet Isaiah told the king that the Eternal One had spoken, that the king should put his affairs in order because his life was coming to an end. Hezekiah placed his face against a wall and made a sincere and tearful prayer: “Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” On his way out, Isaiah had not even reached the courtyard when he heard the Eternal One tell him that He had heard the king’s prayer, seen his tears and that he would add fifteen years to Hezekiah’s life. The Eternal also declared that in memory of His servant King David, He would deliver the king and the city of Jerusalem from the aggressions of the King of Assyria. Isaiah placed a piece of fig cake on Hezekiah’s ulcer and miraculously healed him.⁹²

Le Picart comments on how beautiful he finds the king’s oration to God. For the benefit of the audience, Le Picart goes over Hezekiah’s devotion and accomplishments by speaking for the king while he prays to God. Hezekiah implored God to remember how devoted he was to his faith. He had restored the kingdom’s true faith by reversing his father’s idolatry. Hezekiah had destroyed the idols established by his father Ahaz and reopened the Jewish temple, formerly closed by his father. Hezekiah had also destroyed the serpent of *Arain* because Jews had been worshipping it as an idol. Finally, the king implores God to think of him in his illness.

⁹¹ Le Picart’s sermons were compiled by his publisher Nicolas Chesneau and the specific sermons in the collections are not dated. They were published posthumously in compilations and organized around the liturgical calendar.

⁹² For Hezekiah’s illness and miraculous recovery, see II Kings 20:1-11.

Le Picart quickly points out that making a case to God based on one's accomplishments is not vanity. On the contrary, it is a means to clear the conscience when faced with adversity and a kind of consolation in the face of death when a person has lived and worked for God. Hezekiah did not seek honour and glory by doing this, but to make tribute and to thank God as the king attributes all his accomplishments to God. To be able to receive divine benefits, previous graces and benefits must be acknowledged. However, since the king had to perform this penance, he must have first offended God in some way. His illness and foretold death were a divine punishment because Hezekiah had refused to marry and failed to carry on king David's lineage, and thus defied God's pronouncement that the messiah would come from David's descendants. However, Le Picart excuses Hezekiah's failings: "I tell you, there is no one so just who has not offended God in some way".⁹³ But Hezekiah had immediately turned to God to honour and serve Him, he wept and performed penance. God gives people the grace to choose to abandon or turn to Him.

Le Picart then contrasts this story with the mindset of contemporary heretics. In the same sermon, Le Picart tells the audience the story of King Herod who had pretended to seek out the place where Christ would be born in order to pay him homage. Herod had convened princes, priests and scribes to seek their council and locate Christ's birthplace. However, Herod intended to kill Jesus and eliminate a potential usurper to his throne. Herod's true intentions became clear when he ordered the death of every boy in Bethlehem aged two and younger.

⁹³ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 2, p. 483.

Le Picart sees the same behaviour of Herod's style of deception in contemporary heretics. The king presented himself as righteous when he asked to know the truth, but only with the intention of destroying it, in the same way defense lawyers ask to see evidence in order have it removed from consideration based on a legal technicality and cause the breakdown in judicial proceedings, thus allowing the true criminal to avoid punishment. Similarly, heretics study the scriptures more closely than good Christians in order to better corrupt them by tampering with their meaning. Their heretical intention is not to manifest the truth, but to destroy it: "It is truly destroying truth to say that our Lord is not in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, they search the scriptures to adulterate and corrupt them".⁹⁴ In other words, heretics manipulate religion to corrupt it from within in an effort to deny sacramental reality.

Le Picart's demonstrations are carefully articulated. The preacher favours stories drawn from the Old Testament to serve as the points of reference for the audience. These biblical *exempla* are presented as fact and teach the audience biblical history. The preacher then presents the doctrine he hopes the audience will retain from his sermon. Finally, Le Picart articulates the moral and spiritual implications of the doctrine under discussion by laying out the binary outcomes of both righteous and heretical positions. The devil plays a key role in Le Picart's rhetoric in defining heretical Calvinists. The Huguenots seem righteous and pious but Le Picart points to the devil as the true architect behind their false doctrines.

An eschatological imperative is almost always present in Le Picart's discourse. Even if the apocalypse is not explicitly referenced, the shadow of God's Final

⁹⁴ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 240.

Judgement figures extensively in his sermons. He blames Protestant heretics for causing the evil times confronting France and tells the audience that if France falls into heresy, God would destroy everything. However, he places a great deal of blame on ordinary French Catholics who have acted as a proxy for the proliferation of heresy in France by allowing their thoughts and behaviours to be sinful. When beliefs and behaviours are contrary to God's teachings, it provides a cover for heretics to multiply and further drive a wedge between the Church and its people. Le Picart's religious agenda involves reforming the minds and heart of his audience in order to keep them from becoming heretics, a strategic move in his battle against demonic heretics. The use of a rhetoric designed to internalize guilt and fear among the members of the audience was an important component in this strategy, to motivate them to act against heretics, even violently.

Le Picart's intention was to normalize religious behaviours and beliefs approved by the Church. In his sermons, the preacher first presented the correct doctrine to the audience, and he would then establish a contrast between Catholic teachings and heretical behaviour. He used the concepts of the devil and heresy as rhetorical tools to prove the reality of Catholic sacraments and associated heretical Protestants with the devil. For example, in his third Thursday's Advent sermon, Le Picart begins with an exhortation concerning the authority of the Catholic Church: "The leader of this church is Jesus Christ, and the principal leader and sovereign directly under him is Saint Peter, and our Holy Father the Pope".⁹⁵ Le Picart explains the different levels of authority within the Church, concerning bishops, priests and monks and compares them to the

⁹⁵ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 111: "Le chef de cette église, c'est Jésus Christ, et le chef principal et souverain soudainement sous lui, c'est Saint Pierre et notre Saint Père le Pape".

vertical decks built on Noah's ark. God had commanded the ark to be built with different levels and Le Picart uses this as an analogy to illustrate the different levels of authority within the Church. Those who were outside the ark perished, just as those who are outside the Church will perish.

The demonstration then turns to the false religious attitudes and behaviours of heretical Protestants. They are outside the body and authority of the Church and are separated from God's grace since they lack any faith: "All those who are outside the faith of our Holy Mother Church are on the path of eternal damnation".⁹⁶ Heretics perform great acts of charity and profess a great faith in God, but it is all for appearances. Their heretical behaviour may seem to demonstrate a kind of charity: "They have an exterior appearance of religion (...) Heretics say they believe in God and Jesus Christ, they lie because they do not have the faith imbued, neither charity in their heart".⁹⁷ Le Picart is contradicting the Protestant doctrine that a person can find salvation by "faith alone".⁹⁸ He establishes a clear separation between those who accept the authority of the Catholic Church and those who reject it and defines those in the latter category as heretics. Even if heretics live virtuously all their lives, they will still die by fire. This fiery theme lets Le Picart transition to the devil: "All of this proceeds from the devil of hell". Cases of suspected heresy are confirmed when the suspect dies by fire without any torment on their face: "If heretics do not move when they are in the

⁹⁶ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 112: "Tous ceux qui sont hors de la foi de notre Mère Sainte Église sont en voie de damnation éternelle".

⁹⁷ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 112: "Ils ont une apparence de religion. (...) Les hérétiques disent qu'ils croient en Dieu et en Jésus Christ, ils mentent car ils n'ont point la foi infusée ni charité en leur cœur".

⁹⁸ Phillip Cary, *The Meaning of Protestant Theology: Luther, Augustine and the Gospel that Gives us Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2019), p. 239.

fire, this is not confidence: but an obstinacy of heart which proceeds from the devil of hell and their sins”.⁹⁹ The same was said of Anabaptist heretics in the Dutch lands and about witches during their trial, that the devil’s power over them kept them from crying.

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The powers of the devil include manipulating the mental faculties of humans, mainly to tempt his victims away from salvation: “The tribulations and the devil thus imprints with evil fantasies in the imaginative part of man by permission of God, and thus can enter the bodies of men, but not the heart, nor the spirit.”¹⁰¹ To counter the devil’s temptations, people must see suffering and hardship as a kind of martyrdom that is pleasing to God and that the individual must happily endure in the same manner as if they were being burnt alive for their faith. The martyr must tell the devil: “do you not see that the evil and torment that you inflict on me give me relief?”¹⁰² The solution to the temptations of the devil is for people to place Jesus in their hearts and be content to die and join God: “(...) the devil trembles in the presence of a good man. (...) Devils fear St. Paul because of the name Jesus. (...) Jesus torments the devils”.¹⁰³ In the fifteenth century, Bernardino of Siena presented the name of Christ as a means to fight the devil. His dramatic performances using the monogram IHS shocked other members

⁹⁹ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 113: “Si les hérétiques ne se mouvement point quand ils sont au feu, cela n’est confiance: mais une obstination de cœur qui procède du diable d’enfer et de leur pêcher”.

¹⁰⁰ Waite, *Eradicating the Devil’s Minions*, p. 112.

¹⁰¹ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 214: “La tribulation et diable impriment ainsi des fantaisies mauvaises en la partie imaginative de l’homme par la permission de Dieu, ainsi qu’il entre au corps de l’homme, non pas au cœur ni l’esprit”.

¹⁰² Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 214: “Ne vois-tu pas que le mal et tourment que tu me fais me donne soulagement?”

¹⁰³ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 217: “ (...) le diable tremble en la présence d’un homme de bien. (...) Les diables craignent Saint Paul, c’est pour ce nom ici Jésus. (...) Jésus est le tourment des diables”.

of the clergy and led to accusations of heresy. Like Bernardino, Le Picart delivered sermons emphasizing the devil's ability to trick people away from salvation: "The devil is the cause that by his methods and trickery he will debauch a poor cleric". Le Picart sets up a scenario where the devil tricks a well-intentioned preacher into making profits from his sermons, making it clear that his apparent good works are really accomplished through the suggestion and persuasion of the devil.¹⁰⁴

The same can be said of heretics. In a sermon defending the worship of saints, Le Picart explains that heretics say Catholics are cockroaches because they worship the saints: "Heretics are talkers, not for good, but for evil and deception, because with soft words, full of suffering and fraud, they seduce and trick the simple people who do not hear or know their diabolical guile".¹⁰⁵ St. Genevieve's life of abstinence and austerity is given as an example to combat demonic temptation and deception: "St. Genevieve shows and teaches us how we keep ourselves from deception from the chatter and tricks of the devil". The devil would never suggest anything to anyone with a good reason, to fast, be abstinent, or to make vows, it is ultimately to make them lose all sense and reason. If austerity is too great, it will cause a person to break their vows.¹⁰⁶ Sacrifice and abstinence are effective rituals to combat temptation, however some wish to go too far, which is a false burden. Being attentive to the Church is the best solution to avoid the errors and deception: "If you see someone either preaching or otherwise who is

¹⁰⁴ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 222: "Le diable est la cause que par ses moyens et tromperies il fera débaucher un pauvre religieux".

¹⁰⁵ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 476. "Et les hérétiques sont engluers, non pas à bien, mais à mal et déception, car par douce paroles pleine de dol et de fraude, ils séduisent et trompent les gens simples qui n'entendent pas et ne savent pas leur cautelles diaboliques"

¹⁰⁶ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 231: "Saint Geneviève nous montre et apprend que nous gardions d'être déçus par les causes et tromperies du diable".

unheeded and does not speak or act according to the Church and the truth, flee him and avoid him more than you would all the devils of hell because he is even more dangerous”.¹⁰⁷

Predictably, Le Picart frames the battle against the devil in moral terms. God has built into humankind the moral ability to fight against sin, the world, the temptations of the flesh and the devil. The devil’s instruments of temptation are diverse and deceptive, they are aimed at human weaknesses: vanity, greed, envy and malice.¹⁰⁸ Le Picart’s message to his audience is simple and plainly articulated: France and its people must stay within the Catholic Church in order to be saved. Anything foreign or contrary to Catholic truth can only be the work of the devil and heretics, all of which risks triggering the apocalypse. Le Picart’s attitude towards excommunication illustrates the preacher’s perspective. The preacher sees excommunication as a worse punishment than demonic possession. Ultimately, this perspective applies to the larger religious crisis concerning how demonic heresy has corrupted France and left the kingdom at risk of being destroyed from within. Le Picart advises good Christians to watch each other for mortal sins in order to prevent transgressors from being excommunicated. St. Paul excommunicated a man who had maintained a sexual relationship with his stepmother after the death of his father. Seeing this enormous sin, St. Paul sent the fornicator to the devil to torment him in order to save him, and Le Picart concludes “when someone has done this he must be excommunicated, he is cast into the hands of the devil. (...) I

¹⁰⁷ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 261: “Si vous voyez quelqu’un soit prêchant ou autrement sans foi et ne fait ni dit selon l’Église et la vérité, fuyez le et l’évitez plus que vous ne feriez tous les diables d’enfer car il est plus dangereux”.

¹⁰⁸ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 550.

would rather have the devil in my body than to be unjustly excommunicated, because we are not excluded from Grace by having ten millions demons in the body”.¹⁰⁹

Taylor is correct that there is a kind of comforting message in Le Picart’s sermons. The preacher does insist on salvation, warns the audience against the devil and often provides hope to his audience by offering religious and spiritual solutions for everyday problems faced by ordinary people. However, Le Picart’s agenda was to defend Catholic truth against demonic Protestants and to prevent France from falling into heresy and by extension, the devil. Exploiting the threat of the apocalypse, eternal damnation and the agency of the devil were not beneath the preacher, which all seems somewhat less than comforting. For Le Picart, in the same manner a person outside the Church is denied salvation, the kingdom will undoubtedly be destroyed if France is left in the hands of demonic heretics. The violent extermination of members of a religion literally inspired by the devil is one of the logical outcomes of Le Picart’s depiction in his sermons. It was an immediate threat to both individual as well as collective salvation. A very similar demonizing rhetoric had already been applied to Waldensian heretics in the fifteenth century, a paradigm that transformed both heterodoxy and the practice of magic into devil worship. Le Picart’s discourse was thus following a model of discreditation through his demonizing rhetoric that had already been established by mendicant preachers during the fifteenth century in their battle against heretical groups opposing the Church.

¹⁰⁹ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 108: “Quand quelqu’un a fait le parquoy il doit être excommunié, il est baillé entre les mains du diable. (...) J’aimerais mieux que le diable fut en mon corps que d’être injustement excommunié car pour avoir dix millions de diables au corps, on n’est pas hors de grâce”.

Le Picart's main line of arguments against heresy was a systematic defense of Catholic sacraments against Protestant attacks, primarily those directed against clerical powers over sacramental absolution and the Eucharist. Le Picart takes Martin Luther to task for his views concerning the Eucharist and transubstantiation in a sermon for Pentecost Monday. Le Picart states that he does not know how Luther could even perform any kind of dignified penance to redeem himself considering that he is the cause of so much evil, and because of him, so many others are causing evil: "Are they not good Antichrists, when they want to confuse Jesus Christ, under the shadow that they want Him to be known".¹¹⁰ Luther is worse than all his disciples combined. Luther himself stated that Jesus Christ was present on the altar, but Luther goes too far when he maintains that the wine and the bread retain their nature and remain in their substance, meaning they are not really transformed. Le Picart insists that in fact, it is entirely the contrary, because the bread and the wine are transubstantiated into the body of Christ, "without their form (*sans fubier*)".¹¹¹ Le Picart uses the term "sans fubier" figuratively to describe the wine and the bread once they are transubstantiated. "Fubier" is an archaic French term meaning *costume, uniform* or refers to the manner in which a person is dressed.¹¹²

Martin Luther and other Protestant leaders were similarly preaching that the Pope and the Catholic Church were serving the Antichrist.¹¹³ Luther published *Against*

¹¹⁰ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Pasques*, p. 93: "Ne sont-ils pas bien antéchrists quand ils veulent confondre Jésus Christ sous ombre de vouloir donner à connaître".

¹¹¹ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Pasques*, p. 257.

¹¹² Emile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, vol. 1 (Paris: Hachette, 1863), *Affubier* p. 10 and *Fubier* p. 1018.

¹¹³ Bernard Cottret, *Histoire de la Réforme protestante: Luther, Calvin, Wesley (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles)* (Paris: Perrin, 2001), p. 141.

the Papacy in Rome, Founded by the Devil in 1545, a scathing pamphlet in German depicting the image of the pope sitting on his throne that was in the mouth of a dragon representing the mouth of hell.¹¹⁴ In this pamphlet, Luther describes a mythical history of the papacy and how it was established by the devil in person, sometime between the reigns of Gregory the Great and Boniface III (c. 605-607).¹¹⁵ On the sacramental powers of the Catholic clergy and the doctrine of transubstantiation, Luther wrote that: “It is said that the pope has the power to do it; I say that is all fiction, he does not have a hair's breadth of power to change what Christ has made; and whatever of these things he changes, that he does as a tyrant and Antichrist. I should like to hear how they will prove it.”¹¹⁶ Luther's depiction of Pope Paul III as the Antichrist was also a way of calling into question the pope's political authority. With the prospect of an ecumenical council convened between the papacy and the Empire, exposing the pope as the Antichrist would discredit any formal condemnation of Lutheran theology while also disproving the false doctrines of the Catholic Church.¹¹⁷

In the face of such attacks, Le Picart defends Catholic exclusivity concerning sacramental absolution and warns the audience against the apparently appealing Protestant opinion that individuals can absolve each other without the intervention of the Church. The Catholic priest does not merely proclaim to the sinner that his sin has been

¹¹⁴ Mark U. Edwards Jr., “Luther's Polemical Controversies” in Donald K. McKim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 192-206, see p. 202.

¹¹⁵ Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics (1531-1546)* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 163.

¹¹⁶ C.M. Jacobs and H.E. Jacobs (eds.), *Works of Martin Luther with Introduction and Notes*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Philadelphia A.J. Holman Company, 1915), p. 365.

¹¹⁷ Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft*, p. 81 and Jotham Parsons “Papauté, histoire et mémoire gallicane au XVIe siècle”, *Revue de l'histoire des religions: La culture gallicane, références et modèles (droits, ecclésiologie, histoire)*, no. 3 (2009), p. 321.

forgiven, it is through the priest himself that the sin becomes absolved because it is “God’s verdict itself”.¹¹⁸ Catholic sacraments were not created by humankind and sins cannot be absolved by individuals. Believing the opposite is heresy and can only lead to damnation. The holy sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ: “[You] must not repeat what the heretics say, who expose this, I declare that you are absolved. If it were so, a woman could say the same. (...) We can say to each other, this or that sin has been remised or forgiven. It is not for a woman to absolve sins, but for priests (...) the priest has the power to forgive and absolve sins”.¹¹⁹

The other exclusive power reserved for priests is the consecration of the Host. The Catholic mass is specifically upheld as the most important ritual to a Christian who wishes to receive God’s salvation: “The greatest testimony of Christian faith is the Holy Sacrifice of the mass; also the irreverence that we show [against] it, God takes this very much to heart”.¹²⁰ Le Picart laments this perceived popular “irreverence” concerning the mass. The preacher states that for a thousand years of Christian history, almost all the sacraments and doctrines have been “impugned”, except the mass: the Holy Trinity, Jesus’s divinity and Mary’s virginity have all been attacked, but never the mass, until the eleventh century that is. Le Picart finds that before heretical attacks against the mass, people used to be more reverential, “which removed any heresy”.¹²¹ According to Le Picart, the first person ever to speak against the mass was the Archdeacon of Anger,

¹¹⁸ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 40.

¹¹⁹ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 40: “Il ne faut pas dire comme les hérétiques, qui exposent cela. Je te déclare que tu es absolu. S’il est ainsi, une femme en dirait bien autant. (...) Nous pouvons dire les uns aux autres le pêché d’un tel est réémis et pardonné. Il n’appartient pas à une femme de remettre les péchés, mais aux prêtres (...) le prête à la puissance de remettre les péchés et d’absoudre”.

¹²⁰ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 42.

¹²¹ Le Picart, *Les sermons (...) Advent*, vol. 1, p. 42.

Berengar of Tours, in the eleventh century, who denied the “real presence” in the Eucharist and was condemned and burned as a heretic in 1050 by the Council of Tours.¹²² This was then followed by John Wycliffe (c. 1330-1384) and Jan Hus (c. 1369-1415) who revived the ashes of Berengar and who were also condemned and burned by Church councils, more recently in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Le Picart names them out of chronological order. John Wycliffe who died of a stroke was burnt post mortem, excommunicated and declared a heretic at the Council of Constance in 1415. Wycliffe was older and active prior to Jan Hus who was put on trial and executed, also at the Council of Constance.

The heretical attack on the holy sacraments by Protestants confirmed Catholic truth and proved that heretics were in league with the devil.¹²³ Le Picart presents to his audience a worldview where spiritual forces take an active role in the moral and spiritual choices of each individual. France was perceived as a battleground between good and evil, God and the devil, religion and heresy. A subtext of combat pervades Le Picart’s sermons. According to his sermons, Le Picart believed that Protestantism was a religion inspired by the devil, who actively exploited and propagated false beliefs disguised as righteous ones in order to better corrupt France and its people. This apocalyptic interpretation of religious conflicts and the crisis it created follows a well-trodden tradition established by other preachers. As discussed in the previous chapters, in the fifteenth century, the Dominican preacher St. Vincent Ferrer had been predicting the apocalypse and the arrival of the Antichrist on a daily basis in his sermons. Similarly,

¹²² Charles Radding and Francis Newton, *Theology, Rhetoric, and Politics in the Eucharistic Controversy, 1078-1079: Alberic of Monte Cassino Against Berengar of Tours* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 88.

¹²³ Waite, “Sixteenth Century Religious Reform”, p. 488.

the Franciscan preacher Bernardino of Siena had associated Satan with sin, heresy and magic. Bernardino delivered sermons declaring that the ‘real’ demons were the members of the audience and would also list the signs of the apocalypse: sin, war, heresy, sedition and rebellion.¹²⁴ In the sixteenth century, the Reformation had exacerbated the sense that apocalypse was near. Both Protestant ministers and Catholic preachers correspondingly perceived the End of Times. For Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell, from the 1490s to 1648:

(...) the apocalyptic vision and eschatological speculations can be found across Europe. Not only did it affect theologians and the learned, but it shaped the worldview of common people, as can be seen from sermons (...). The ongoing conflict between Protestantism in all its forms, and Counter-Reformation Catholicism, ensured that the apocalyptic mood would continue throughout the sixteenth century, with the Wars of Religion in France and the war of independence in the Netherlands.¹²⁵

Le Picart’s sermons constitute a prime example of the demonizing discourse that associated Protestants with the devil prior to the outbreak of the French civil wars. This strategy followed the historical model fashioned from the work of inquisitors and medicant preachers who battled oppositional religious groups in the Middle Ages. To expose Protestants as demonic heretics, the Church demonstrated its divine origins and foundations in the form of biblical *exempla*, the veracity of sacramental powers of priests and the exclusive ownership of salvation. The demonic and conspiratorial characterisation of Protestants in Catholic sermons were confirmed when the civil war broke out in 1562, when the Huguenots orchestrated armed insurrections and when they performed acts of iconoclasm and desecrated churches. In the next chapter, we will see

¹²⁴ Franco Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 23.

¹²⁵ Cunningham and Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, p. 11.

how these unholy acts were used in sermons during the civil conflicts by preachers such as Simon Vigor and in Catholic accounts of Huguenot massacres in order to expose the demonic nature of Protestant heretics and to justify their extermination.

Chapter 5 – The French Wars of Religion and the Rhetoric of Massacres

François Le Picart's demonizing rhetoric reflected previous preachers' attacks on earlier heretics by insisting on the religious truth of the sacraments. His rhetoric, which defined Protestantism as a religion inspired by the devil, served as a model for other anti-Protestant polemicists. In a formal grievance addressed to the king in 1560 concerning the crown's toleration of heresy, Jean de la Vacquerie singles out Le Picart as someone who had the courage to expose the corrupting influence of heretics. La Vacquerie gives an account, discussed in chapter 4, of Le Picart's audacious preaching at Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie which provoked a man to try and strangle the preacher, which resulted in the man being thrown out of the church and killed by the crowd attending the sermon. In a kind of foreshadowing of the 1572 Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, La Vacquerie echoes Le Picart in his advice to the king: "Do not wait for the Judgement of God. (...) Do not allow the atheists and blasphemers to live in your kingdom, thus burn them or let them be stoned by the people in imitation of the St. prophet Moses".¹ Further in his *Remontrance*, La Vacquerie references Matthew 24 which gives an account of Jesus describing the signs of the End Times and the Second Coming. La Vacquerie then cites St. Bernard's interpretation of this biblical passage to

¹ Jean de la Vacquerie, *Remontrance adressé au roy, aux princes catholiques, et à tous Magistrats & Gouverneurs de Républiques, touchant l'abolition des troubles & émotions qui se sont aujourd'hui en France, causez par les hérésies qui y règnent & par la Chrétienté* (Paris: Jean Poupy, 1574), pp. 36-37: "N'attendez pas le jugement de Dieu. (...) Ne permettez les athéistes et blasphémateurs vivre en votre royaume, ainsi faites-les bruler ou bien faites-les lapider par le populaire à l'imitation du saint prophète Moïse". La Vacquerie's *Remontrance* was initially issued in 1560, see Kathleen A. Parrow, *A Defense to Resistance: Justification of Violence during the French Wars of Religion* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1993), p. 40.

connect it to Protestants in contemporary France: “Whomever looks closely (says he) at the works of the heretics, will know clearly from them the artifice, the quality and the power of Satan”.² Similarly, Hilarion de Coste wrote *Le parfait ecclésiastique ou l’histoire de la vie et de la mort de François Le Picart* (*The Perfect Ecclesiastic or the History of the Life and Death of François Le Picart*), published in 1658, in which he recounts Le Picart’s anti-Huguenots sermon delivered at the execution of fourteen heretics at Meaux in 1546.³ The sermon Le Picart delivered at the execution of the heretics at Meaux has not been preserved. As quoted in chapter 4, De Coste describes the content of his sermon as a lecture on the sacramental powers of priests and the ‘true presence’ of Christ in the Host as established in the doctrine of transubstantiation. Furthermore, after Le Picart’s death in 1556, Artus Désiré published a pamphlet dedicated to his memory and his work against heresy.⁴ The pamphlet describes the great loss caused by the death of such a saintly preacher and how 20,000 Parisians followed Le Picart’s casket “in tears” during the public funeral procession. De Coste describes how a few hours after his death, Le Picart’s body was exposed in the garden at his residence where “the poor and the simple people could consider the holiness of his life and doctrine, made their books and paternosters touch his hands”, giving the impression that a saint had died.⁵ The printer Nicolas Chesneau, who published Le Picart’s sermons

² Vacquerie, *Remontrance*, p. 59: “Qui regarde de près (dit-il) aux œuvres des hérétiques, il connaît clairement en celles-ci l’artifice, vertu et puissance de Satan”.

³ Hilarion de Coste, *Le parfait ecclésiastique ou l’histoire de la vie et de la mort de François Le Picart, Seigneur d’Attily & de Villeron, docteur en théologie de Paris & doyen de Saint Germain de l’Auxerrois* (Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1658), p. 172.

⁴ Artus Désiré, *Les regrets et complaintes de Passe partout et Bruitcourt sur la mémoire renouvelée du trépas et bout de l’an de feu très noble et vénérable personne Maistre François Picart (...)* (Paris: Pierre Gaultier, 1557).

⁵ De Coste, *Le parfait ecclésiastique*, p. 233: “les pauvres et simples gens qui considérait sa sainteté et de vie et de doctrine, faisaient toucher à ses mains leurs livres et patenôtres”.

posthumously, wrote a preface explaining the importance of conserving these sermons. Chesneau quotes Matthew 24 which made him realise that this passage is a “true description of our present times” caused by seducers who call themselves Christians, wars between nations, famines and pestilence, and all the calamities: “Here are the sermons of the End of Times, for people to know where we are”.⁶ Le Picart’s prophetic warning concerning Judgement Day, the demonic nature of Huguenot heretics and the need to exterminate them was repeated and used to justify the violent impulse to “burn them or let them be stoned by the people” in order to protect France and the Church.

5.1 – Religious Massacres

In 1562, a few years after Le Picart’s death in 1556, the French Wars of Religion broke out. Religious tensions between Catholics and Protestants in France finally exploded into a religious civil war. For Catholics, the source of the conflict during the French Wars of Religion was to prevent the establishment of Protestantism in France. The first event that broke the peace was the Massacre of Vassy on March 1, 1562.

The outbreaks of violence were preludes to the civil war. As seen in Le Picart’s sermons, the demonizing religious rhetoric and the occurrences of violence brought on by religious tensions all point to a logic of confrontation between the Huguenots and Catholics. In the meantime, the crown was struggling to keep the peace. However, in her attempts to keep the peace, Catherine de Medici’s royal concessions had progressively allowed Protestants to become bolder in their open hostility towards Catholics: “Each

⁶ Le Picart, *Les sermons et instructions chrestiennes, pour tous les dimanches et toutes les festes des saints, depuis Pasques jusques à la Trinité, avec douze sermons du mesme auteur, touchant le Saint Sacrement de l'autel et les constitutions de l'Église catholique... fidèlement recueillis, ainsi qu'ils ont esté prononcez par feu... M. Maistre François Le Picart (...)* (Paris: N. Chesneau, 1565), p. Aii: “Vrai description du temps présent. (...) Voilà les sermons des derniers temps, à savoir où nous sommes”.

move became a stimulus to the Protestants to ask for more and an invitation to local confrontation”.⁷ A common Huguenot practice was image breaking – Iconoclasm – of Catholic icons. These acts of sacrilege exposed Protestants’ own hostility and sacrilegious tendencies in the eyes of their opponents, not just toward God, but also towards the Catholic monarchs. In May 1562, the Huguenot aristocracy settled in Orléans in defiance of the queen mother’s order to return to court in Fontainebleau and instead occupied the city. At Orléans, the heart of the recently deceased King Francis II was removed from its urn, cooked over a fire and fed to dogs.⁸ At Bourges, the monument to Joan of Arc was desecrated and burned when the Huguenots sacked the city in May 1562. On April 15, 1562, the Huguenots took the city of Rouen in an armed coup. They expelled all the Catholic leaders of the city and vandalised all its churches on May 3 and 4 in celebration of their victory: they smashed and destroyed altars, idols, baptismal fonts, pews, coffers and any holy objects they could prise loose.⁹ The Calvinist minister Marlorat, an instigator of the iconoclasm rouennais, seeing the destruction of images reported that: “Even those who did not appear at our assemblies helped to break and tear down [temples] and they brought the disfigured wood into the open street to be burnt and all with as much if not more cheer than those who had begun the task”.¹⁰

⁷ Mark Greengrass, *Christendom Destroyed: Europe (1517-1648)* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), p. 403.

⁸ Greengrass, *Christendom Destroyed*, p. 403; See also Marc Antoine René de Voyer Argenson (ed.), *Mélanges tirés d'une grande bibliothèque*, vol. 18 (Moutard: 1783), p. 250.

⁹ Philip Benedict, *Rouen During the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 96-98.

¹⁰ Augustine Marlorat, *Apologie des ministres et anciens de l'Église reformée en la ville de Rouen* (1562), p. 117: “Même ceux qui n’avaient pas hanté nos assemblées ont aidé à rompre et abattre [les temples] et apporter le bois défiguré en pleine rue pour être brulé et le tout autant ou lus allègrement que ceux qui avaient commencé la besogne.”

The Huguenots had early successes in the southern French Midi in the early years of the civil conflict. The cities of Lyon, Nimes, Montauban and Montpellier were taken by the Huguenots in armed coups. However, some cities were able to put down Huguenot insurrections. Dijon, Toulouse, Aix-en-Provence and Bordeaux were able to remain in the hands of Catholics after failed Huguenot attempts to take the cities. And Catholics reacted to this open hostility even more violently. On April 12, 1562, in the city of Sens located in Burgundy, over 100 Huguenots were massacred or else were tied to poles and drowned.¹¹ The contemporary Catholic priest and chronicler, Claude Haton (c. 1534-1605), reported on the hostilities in Sens in his writings.¹² The type of apologist account he presents is an example of the practice of sanitizing the direct participation of the Catholic population in the massacre of Sens. These kinds of account absolve French Catholic historical responsibility after such horrifying and gruesome events. According to Haton, the Huguenot preacher was the instigator of the riot. Catholic outsiders attacked the Huguenots while the Catholic inhabitants were still attending mass. The Huguenots were all massacred by Catholics who were defending themselves:

(...) while the preaching minister was enhardening and encouraging his own into hostility and sacking, under the name of piety and perfect sacrifice; all in one moment, without realising, they were assaulted during their preaching by unknown men from the villages and faubourgs [outside the city], who, so quickly rushed them hitting them with stones and sticks, as if they were piles of hays and levers, that the

¹¹ Greengrass, *Christendom Destroyed*, p. 403.

¹² Claude Haton, *Mémoires de Claude Haton*, édition scientifique sous la direction de Laurent Bourquin (Paris: éditions du CTHS) vol. 1: 1553-1565 (2001), vol. 2: 1566-1572 (2003), vol. 3: 1573-1577 (2005), vol. 4: 1578-1582, (2007). Previous edition: *Mémoires de Claude Haton, contenant le récit des événements accomplis de 1553 à 1582, principalement dans la Champagne et la Brie*, 3 vols., Félix Bourquelot (ed.) (Paris: imprimerie impériale, 1857), pp. 189-194: "(...) pendant que le ministre prêchant enhardissait et encourageait les siens à toute hostilité et saccagement, sous le nom de piété et de sacrifice parfait; tout en un moment, sans y penser, furent assaillis en leurs prêches par gens inconnus des village et faubourgs, qui si vivement se ruèrent sur eux à coups de pierres et bâtons, comme pieux de haïes et leviers, que les huguenots n'eurent le loisir de mettre à leur main leurs pistolets et arquebuses les premiers".

Huguenots did not have the leisure to put at hand their pistols and harquebuses first.

Sanitizing Catholic responsibility post-massacre was another method utilized in the process of demonizing Protestants. The central message of Haton’s interpretation of the events is that the massacre was not wrong if the Huguenots deserved it. After receiving the news of this violent massacre, the leader of the Huguenot armies, the Prince of Condé, wrote a letter to complain to Catherine de Medici concerning the “unprovoked” atrocities committed at Sens.¹³



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Figure 1: The massacre committed at Sens in Burgundy in April 1562 by Jean-Jacques (1536-1611).¹⁴

¹³ Louis de Bourbon de Condé, April 19, 1562, “Lettre de Monsieur le Prince de Condé, à la Reine-Mère, sur le massacre fait à Sens”, in *Mémoires de Condé*, Volume 3 (Chez Rollin, 1743), p. 300.

¹⁴ Jean-Jacques (1536-1611), *Le Massacre fait à Sens en Bourgogne par la populace au mois d'avril 1562*, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84005068.item>

These hostilities in 1562 marked the beginning of the armed conflicts of the war. They would last until 1598 with the ascension of Henry IV to the throne of France and the signing of the Edict of Nantes.

5.2 – Catholic Preaching during the French Wars of Religion

Le Picart's demonizing rhetorical style continued to be echoed in Catholic sermons in the next decades during the civil conflicts. In the 1560s and 1570s, the "radical preacher" Simon Vigor was warning his audience that God will punish the people of France if heresy continues to be allowed to proliferate. Barbara Diefendorf qualifies Vigor as 'radical' because the 'inflammatory rhetoric' in his sermons was directed towards provoking civil disobedience in the period leading up to the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572: "Vigor's message of passionate hatred against the heretics contains a forceful challenge to social and political order".¹⁵ Once more, the threat of the apocalypse and eternal damnation are presented as very possible outcomes if France remains in the grip of the "heretical ministers of Satan".¹⁶ Signing a treaty with heretics is signing a pact with the devil: "It is not permitted without great discretion to receive a heretic in the company of Catholics, certainly less is it permitted to contract any peace with the heretics, no more than with the devil".¹⁷ How can a few hundred Huguenot soldiers keep a whole country in a state of submission? God permits it

¹⁵ Barbara Diefendorf, see the *abstract* in "Simon Vigor, A Radical Preacher in Sixteenth Century Paris", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1987), pp. 399-410.

¹⁶ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, Tome 1 (Paris: Thomas Soubron, 1592), p. 26.

¹⁷ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, Tome 1, p. 611: "Que s'il n'est loisible sans grande discrétion recevoir l'hérétique en la compagnie des Catholiques, certainement moins est-il permis contracter aucune paix aces les hérétiques, non plus qu'avec le diable".

because of sinful behaviours: “Do not be amazed if we cannot have victory over Gaspard de Coligny and the Huguenots,¹⁸ even if they are few in number; it is God that makes it so to punish us for our sins”.¹⁹ War, sin, hardship and divine punishment were the same outcomes brought on by demonic heretics and witches as preached in the fifteenth century by Vincent Ferrer and Bernardino of Siena. During the first decades of the sixteenth century, Le Picart replicated the association between Protestant heresy and demonic corruption in his sermons. God’s wrath and the apocalypse were presented as consequences of allowing demonic heresy and witchcraft to operate. This logic of combat is again framed in Vigor’s sermons in terms of the Final Judgement:

No one thinks of what is said of the Day of Judgement in the Holy Scripture, how terrible and dreadful. See what St. Paul said: If the righteous can scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinners go? But on the contrary, and against Holy Scripture, Calvin persuades those of his sect, not to have any fear of the Day of Judgement, as much as, he says, the one who judges us is our advocate.²⁰

Vigor transmits to his audience God’s permission to kill Huguenots. By nature, the Huguenots are vile traitors, however much they appear to be gentle and loyal servants to the king. When a Huguenot is killed, members of his sect will call it “cruel murder”, but they betray their true intentions when they are ready to “move heaven and earth to get

¹⁸ Gaspard II de Coligny (1519-1572) was a French Calvinist nobleman, an Admiral and the leader of the Huguenot armies.

¹⁹ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, Tome 1, p. 72: “Et ne faut s’émerveiller si nous ne pouvons avoir victoire sur Gaspar de Coligny et des Huguenots, encore qu’ils soient en petit nombre c’est Dieu qui le fait afin de nous punir pour nos pêchers ”.

²⁰ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, Tome 1, p. 582: “Personne de pense à ce qui est dit du jour du jugement en l’Écriture sainte, combien il sera terrible et épouvantable. Voir comme parle Saint Pierre: si iustus vix saluabitur, impius et peccator ubi parebunt? Mais au contraire et contre l’expresse parole de l’Écriture saint, Calvin persuade à ceux de sa secte ne faut aucunement craindre le jour du jugement pour autant que, dit-il, celui qui nous jugera est notre avocat”

their vengeance”.²¹ “We must not despair”, he continues, but “instead take courage, but by penitence and true faith let us address God and I am convinced that He will take vengeance and exterminate them. I do not despair, as long as we do our duty by living in charitable union, and you will see that God will convert them or else exterminate them”.²²

His inflammatory exhortations often targeted the political authorities and the crown. After the peace treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Lay (1570) signed between the crown and the Huguenot aristocracy ending the third civil conflict, Vigor preached against any peace made with heretics. In a sermon for Ash Wednesday, he preached on the vice of hypocrisy. His examples include those who pretend to fast and soldiers who pillage the property of loyal subjects under the pretence of protecting them. The discussion then turns to the hypocrisy of those who make “evil and miserable edicts” and cover themselves by calling it an “Edict of Pacification”: “This is a miserable Edict and full of hypocrisy, and by it we can now judge which people who made it”.²³ According to Vigor, this edict will allow the creation of a fourth estate within the kingdom, and that new demands will be made on the people, specifically their money and property. This edict was promulgated on the false notion that it was for the good of the people. On the contrary, said Vigor, they use this cover to better exploit the people.

²¹ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, Tome 1, p. 229.

²² Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, Tome 1, p. 483: “Toutefois pour cela il ne nous faut désespérer et perdre courage, mais par pénitence et vrai foi adressons nous à Dieu et je s’assure qu’il en fera vengeance et les exterminera. Je ne me désespère, pourvu que nous facions notre devoir et vivons ensemble en bonne union, charité et concorde et vous verrez que Dieu les convertira ou bien les exterminera”.

²³ Vigor, *Sermons catholiques pour tous les jours de Carême & fêtes de Pasques, faits en l’Église Saint Etienne*, (A Lyon: pour Paul Frellon, et Abraham Cloquemin, 1593), p. 6: “Voila un édit malheureux et plein d’hypocrisie et par celui-ci on peut juger les personnes qui l’ont fait”.

Vigor then preached against corrupt sovereigns: “When God allows such hypocrites to rule, it is a sign of mutated states and kingdoms and that God is greatly irritated against the people. (...) God allows a hypocritical and worthless king to rule for the sins of his people”.²⁴

Vigor also preached against other parts of the peace treaty of 1570 and insinuated himself into a political and religious controversy between the crown and the civil authorities of Paris known as the Affaire of the Gastine Cross.²⁵ Article 32 of the Edict of Saint-Germain-en-Laye ordered that all signs and monuments commemorating the execution of Protestants erected during years of civil war be torn down in favour of reconciliation and to appease civil dissension. During the last civil conflict, three Huguenots, Philippe Gastine, his son Richard and son-in-law Nicolas Croquet, had been condemned to death by the Parlement of Paris for their participation in illegal assemblies. They were caught and convicted for celebrating the Last Supper according to Protestant rites, an illegal activity at the time in 1569 Paris and proof of their heresy. A cross had been erected on rue Saint-Denis in the place where their now demolished houses once stood. After the peace treaty was signed, Coligny, petitioned by the Gastine family, demanded that their land be restored and that the cross be taken down. At the beginning of the month of September 1571, Charles IX ordered that the cross be removed. The municipal officials in Paris, fearing that this would create further unrest, sent requests to the king that the monument be maintained. The Parlement of Paris reacted conservatively by affirming that the cross had been erected lawfully and that

²⁴ Vigor, *Sermons (...) Église Saint Etienne*, p. 7: “Quand Dieu permet tells hypocrites de régner, c’est un signe d’une mutation d’états et de royaumes et qu’il est grandement irrité contre son peuple. (...) Dieu permet ainsi qu’il y a des hypocrites qui gouvernent pour les pêchers de son peuple”.

²⁵ Sylvie Daubresse, *Parlement de Paris ou la voix de la raison (1559-1589)* (Paris: Droz, 2005), p. 188.

their conviction of July 1569 could not be retracted. A royal order addressed to the president of the Parlement and the civil authorities of the city instructed them to take down the cross “which the aforementioned *sieurs* did not want to do”.²⁶ The municipality and the Parlement both sent a delegation to the king to make an official grievance. A compromise was then reached. The cross would not be torn down, but simply moved to the nearby cemetery of the Saint-Innocents.²⁷

This decision unleashed the anger of Catholic preachers in the city, especially Simon Vigor. In a sermon given at Notre Dame Cathedral in December 1571, Vigor proclaimed that if the people of Paris had opposed the order to remove the cross, it was only because of their passion towards God.²⁸ This sermon was given in commemoration of the Christian victory over the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto in October 1571.²⁹ Vigor first gives a series of Old Testament *exempla*, the stories of Abraham, David, Azariah, the fall of the kingdom of Babylon, and Job were all invoked to explain why God allows ordeals and suffering, sends calamities to test the faith of men and allows wars to occur in order to give humans the chance to conquer evil.³⁰ Vigor then explains how the victory of the Spanish and Italian fleet over the Turks was a sign that God desires victory against heresy. The discussion then turns to the Christian tradition of commemoration honouring Christ, saints, martyrs and victories over heresy with

²⁶ *Mémoires de Claude Haton, contenant le récit des événements accomplis de 1553 à 1582: principalement dans la Champagne et la Brie...*, tome II, (Imprimerie Impériale, 1857), p. 630.

²⁷ Barbara Diefendorf, “Prologue to a Massacre: Popular Unrest in Paris, 1557-1572”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 90, no. 5 (Dec. 1985), p. 1086.

²⁸ Edouard de Barthélemy (ed.), Jean de La Fosse, *Journal d'un curé ligueur de Paris sous les trois derniers Valois*, (Paris: Didier et Ce, 1865), p. 134.

²⁹ Angus Konstam, *Lepanto 1571: The Greatest Naval Battle of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003), p. 49.

³⁰ Simon Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, Tome 2, pp. 229-232.

processions and monuments. There are two main reasons Christians celebrate and commemorate these sacrifices:

The first reason was to remind the people and bring them together to pray to God and offer sacrifice. The second reason was for the rejoicing of the people and to rouse them to devotion and to make sacrifice by sounding the trumpets. This must be done now. By doing so, the use of our bells is a similar way of doing that. Why are you so scandalized? And still, the use of bells is better and even more perfect. And yet they will ring despite you, Huguenot!

All these honours still seem insufficient for Vigor, because Christians today should do even more. Vigor then makes an oblique reference to the Gastine cross controversy:

“But where is the temple and where is the chapel where there is only a cross that we have erected on these places as a sign and for the memory of our victory?”³¹ Vigor laments the lack of commemoration for Catholic victories over the Huguenots at Dreux, Saint Denis, Cognac and Chateau-Neuf. How can God grant Catholic victories in the face of such contempt: “We have had noteworthy victories over the Huguenots. But for this our highness the King and company has not had any churches built”.³² Vigor reproaches the king for not allowing France to participate in the victory of the Holy League over the Turks at Lepanto. In fact, he argues, it was the Huguenots themselves who had solicited the Turks to attack Western Christendom, placing the king in an impossible position. The king could not financially and militarily afford to go to war against the Turks and thereby leave the kingdom wide open for the Huguenots to take

³¹ Simon Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques sur les dimanches et festes depuis l'onzième après la Trinité jusques au Carême (...)*, Tome 2 (Paris: Michel Sonnius, 1597), p. 236: “La première était pour appeler le peuple et le convoquer ensemble pour aller prier Dieu et offrir sacrifice. La seconde cause était pour réjouir le peuple et l’exciter à dévotion et faire sacrifice. Il faut alors sonner la trompette et cela dès maintenant. Si donc l’usage des cloches est semblable à celui-là. Pourquoi t’en s’ scandalise-tu? Et encore l’usage des cloches est encore mieux et plus parfaite. Et pourtant elles sonneront malgré toi, Huguenot!”

³² Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...)* Trinité, pp. 239-240: “Mais où est le temple et où est la chapelle, où seulement la croix que nous avons fait ériger en ces lieux là en signe et pour mémoire de victoire?”

over. This logic, anchored by the fact that the Huguenots had a history of attempting armed coups, allowed Vigor to declare that the victory against the Turks was really a victory against the Huguenots.³³

Vigor remarks that people talk of taking down the cross because it reminds them of the ugliness of the troubles and wars of the recent past. Rather, people should see it as a reminder of how not to fall into heresy and sin. If their religion contained any truth, Vigor wonders why the Huguenots should feel any shame in the martyrdom of their *co-religionaires*. Meanwhile, Catholics should take pride in the conviction and execution of heretics in the name of the true religion when considering the Huguenots have murdered Catholic priests in the past. The cross is a reflection of how their religion is worthless. In fact, people should send official grievances to the king and Vigor insinuates that the king's position on this issue shows that he might not even be a real Catholic: "And we must make grievance to the king, as they wrote against him that we must not receive a king, if he is not of their religion".³⁴ For Barbara Diefendorf: "Vigor's audience did not need to be told that the real subject of his discourse was one particular monument, known as the cross of the Gastines, erected in the rue St. Denis in 1569 to commemorate the execution of three Huguenots".³⁵ Vigor was brought in front of the judges of the Parlement of Paris where he had to convince them that he was not "seditious" for preaching against the treaty and for inciting the people to behave contrary to royal edicts.³⁶

³³ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Trinité*, p. 242.

³⁴ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Trinité*, p. 244.

³⁵ Diefendorf, "Simon Vigor", p. 404.

³⁶ Diefendorf, "Simon Vigor", p. 405.

There was no ambiguity in Vigor's demonizing rhetoric. Vigor used demonological and eschatological language with surgical precision in designating heretics as demonic with unwavering repetition in his sermons. The religious conflict between French Catholics and Protestants was literally equated with the eschatological battle between God and the devil, with eternal salvation hanging in the balance. The political and social implications of the toleration of heretics created a direct threat to salvation and risks provoking the apocalypse. Vigor asks how can France endure "two contrary pastors", one working on behalf of Jesus and the other on behalf of the devil? Allowing two religions to co-exist within the kingdom is equivalent to having two sovereigns. Vigor quickly makes clear the implication that such a situation would inevitably create, that perpetual war between Catholics and Protestants would tear apart the kingdom. This outcome would be unavoidable if heresy continued to be tolerated because God and the devil have been in a perpetual war since the beginning of creation: "As God has said, never will there be peace between God and the devil, between the Church and the heretical ministers of Satan".³⁷ Vigor asks his audience members if they think that God and the devil get along or agree on anything. This would be as difficult as the light and the darkness to be together in the same place and at the same time. Vigor tells the audience:

And as Jesus Christ and the devil are opposite and contrary, as are the Catholics and the heretics and there is no man that exists that could get them to agree. For this reason, no one could be able to stop me from excommunicating and chasing out the heretics out of my parish or from excommunicating and denying the sacraments to those who consort them and favour them.³⁸

³⁷ Simon Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques sur les dimanches et fetes depuis l'Octave de Pascques iusques à l'Advent* (Paris: Thomas Soubron, 1592), Tome 1, p. 26.

³⁸ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, p. 26.

Vigor explains that none should consort with heretics, even if they are their children or their parents. Lies, deceit and conspiracy against the Church and the king are the tools used by the Huguenots to spread discord throughout the kingdom, tools of the devil: “This is what our Savior means with these words, I have come here not to establish peace. In the edict of pacification, or better said of troubles, is not of God, but of the devil”.³⁹ Vigor tells the audience to avoid heretics above all else because “the devil attacks and poisons you with his venom of heresy and perverse doctrine”.⁴⁰ It is better to chase heretics out of the city than risk consorting with them and be excommunicated. Vigor emphasizes the importance of obeying God and accomplishing what He commands: “And in what manner do we show our love to Him? It is that we must hate His adversary”.⁴¹ Vigor recounts the biblical story of Original Sin, how the devil corrupted Eve, and how he turned her against God. From that moment on, there would be a perpetual war between the children of God and the children of Satan. Each person would forever be forced to renounce one in order to please the other: “How would you want today to make peace between the Huguenots children of the devil and the Catholics the children of God? It is only as possible to get them to agree and make them live together peacefully, as between God and the devil”.⁴² Vigor asks the members of the audience whether they would befriend the enemy of their king, and reminds them

³⁹ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, p. 46: “C’est ce que veut dire notre Seigneur par ces paroles: Je suis venu ici non pour mettre la paix. En l’édit de pacification, ou à mieux dire de trouble, n’est pas de Dieu, mais du diable”.

⁴⁰ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, p. 48: “le diable frappe et intoxique de son venin d’hérésie et perverse doctrine”.

⁴¹ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, p. 158: “Et comment pour l’amour de Lui? C’est qu’il faut haïr son adversaire”.

⁴² Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, p. 158-159: “Et comment voudriez-vous faire la paix entre les Huguenots enfants du diable et les Catholiques enfants de Dieu? Il est autant possible de les accorder et faire vivre ensemble pacifiquement, que Dieu et le diable”.

that they would be condemned as traitors if they were ever found out: “If we consent and make an alliance with the devil, we are traitors to Jesus Christ who wishes that we always make war with Satan”.⁴³ Vigor then points out how anyone who colludes with Satan will be condemned by God as a disloyal traitor. The only solution to avoid eternal judgement is to hate the devil and his “ministers” because those who separate themselves from the Church are enemies who can only be stopped through war: “to destroy and put a stop to sin as much in ourselves, to the rest to pray to God that they will convert, or else, that if it pleases Him to exterminate them all under the authority of the king”.⁴⁴

Vigor leaves no room for uncertainty in his exhortation. He establishes a direct relationship between heretics and the devil. He cites biblical history to support the notion that the devil will forever seek to corrupt humanity with his false religion. He then makes an emotional appeal to the audience concerning the consequence of “eternal judgement” for allowing peace between Catholics and heretics, the “ministers of Satan”. Vigor lays out the only viable solution to avoid this outcome, that the Huguenots convert willingly or be “exterminated” by the “authority of the king”, as God has clearly commanded. Religion and politics become intertwined in this uncompromising scenario. There is no question that God wishes heresy to be exterminated. The king’s authority is exercised through God’s sovereignty. According to this paradigm, as presented by

⁴³ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, p. 159.

⁴⁴ Vigor, *Sermons Catholiques (...) Octave*, p. 159: “détruire et empêcher le pêcher autant qu’il est en nous, au reste faire prière à Dieu qu’ils se puissent convertir, ou bien qu’il lui plaise de les exterminer du tout sous l’autorité du roi”.

Vigor, the king is obliged to order the violent extermination of heresy from the kingdom and his subjects are obligated to actively participate in realizing this divine agenda.

With the accumulation of the religious, social and political tensions, the best example of the religious vitriol against Protestants turning religiously violent is the Saint-Bartholomew's Day Massacre on August 24, 1572. Preventing the crown from becoming Protestant became a serious issue when the crown also became worried that part of the nobility, including princes of the blood figuring in the line of succession, would take their converted vassals with them and create a direct threat to royal authority. Moreover, one of the Huguenot leaders, Admiral Coligny, became a close adviser to the king Charles IX, alarming the Catholic aristocracy at court.

In 1568, religious tensions escalated to the point of triggering a third civil war following the failed attempts by Catholics to capture Huguenot leaders by surprise. The peace treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye signed in 1570 put an end to the religious conflicts for the third time. The treaty guaranteed safety and certain rights for Protestants, particularly the retention of fortified cities and castles already under Huguenot control. Additionally, the marriage celebrated in Paris on August 18, 1572, between one of the leaders of the Huguenots, Henri of Navarre (the future Henri IV) and Marguerite, the king's sister, further angered Catholics. The marriage also reinforced Henri de Navarre's claim of succession to the throne of France. All these concessions progressively gave legitimacy to the Huguenots, which was unacceptable to Catholics. On August 22, 1572, the military leader of the Huguenots, Admiral Coligny, escaped an assassination attempt. Very shocked by this attempt on their leader's life, Protestants asked the king to give them justice, which he agreed to do. The king's promise to punish

the person guilty of attempting to kill a Protestant provoked the discontent of the Catholic aristocracy who left the city of Paris in anger. The city, largely Catholic, was hostile to Protestants. However, Protestants still numbered in the thousands in Paris and Protestant leaders had come to the city to celebrate the wedding between Henri de Navarre and the king's sister, Marguerite, a wedding that was meant to represent the reconciliation of the two religious factions that had been waging a civil war. When the king showed favour to Protestants after the failed assassination attempt on Coligny, this angered the Catholic inhabitants of Paris even more.

It is not clear who gave the order, but during the night of August 24, 1572, the day before Saint Bartholomew's Day, ten Huguenots leaders were assassinated, including Coligny.⁴⁵ The religious purge was clearly organised. The Huguenot leaders were each designated a specific assassin who then murdered their specific targets. To prevent the escape of the Huguenot leaders, the city gates of Paris had been locked shut. The next day, when the Catholic population in Paris learned that the Protestant leaders were all dead, they took this as permission to release their hatred without constraint. With their military leaders dead, there was no one left to defend Protestants. They were pursued and hunted down throughout the city, only to be viciously slaughtered and massacred by angry Catholic mobs. The king took responsibility for the massacre and declared that he had eliminated the Protestant leaders to prevent a Huguenot conspiracy against the crown. As the news traveled throughout France, other cities organised similar massacres. The estimates for the number of Protestants killed figure around 2,000 in Paris and between 5,000 and 10,000 in the rest of France. The Protestant movement in

⁴⁵ Janine Garrisson-Estèbe, "Le massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy: qui est responsable?", *Histoire* (Société d'éditions scientifiques), vol. 126, no. 50 (1989), pp. 50-55.

France was severely weakened by the loss of their political and military leaders. The Saint-Bartholomew's Day massacre triggered the fourth civil war, lasting about a year, until 1573.⁴⁶

For Denis Crouzet, the encouragement to exterminate the Huguenots in the demonizing rhetoric of Catholic preachers magnified the collective apocalyptic anguish of the Catholic population. The peace established after the third civil war was barely able to be maintained and only lasted as long as the civil authorities were able to impose the terms of the treaty. Crouzet embraces the notion that the King, Charles IX, and the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici, were directly involved and probably the instigators in the plot to assassinate the Huguenot aristocracy the night of the 24th of August, since it was to their direct advantage. The crown had found itself in a weakened position, being politically and militarily threatened by both religious factions, the Catholic Holy League led by the Duke of Guise and the Protestant faction, led by Admiral Coligny. Militarily strong, the League wanted nothing less than the extermination of heresy within the kingdom and was exasperated by the King's policies of appeasement, while the Huguenots' agenda involved what was perceived to be a political revolution which threatened the status quo concerning their legitimate recognition and also called into question the religious *divinity* invested in the person of the sovereign.⁴⁷ The Protestants' petition to remove the Gastine cross and the scathing response to the king's compliance

⁴⁶ For a complete account of the Saint-Bartholomew's Day Massacre, see Janine Garrisson-Estèbe, *Guerre civile et compromis, 1559-1598* (Paris: Seuil, 1991) and *1572, la Saint-Barthélemy*, (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 2000); Barbara Diefendorf, *The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford: St. Martin's, 2008) and *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Arelette Jouanna, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre: The Mysteries of a Crime of State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁴⁷ Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu*, Tome 2, pp. 77-81.

in the sermons of Vigor showing how the crown was on the receiving end of a double attack (political and religious), then re-doubled because it was coming from both sides (Protestant and Catholic): “Just as in 1562 as in 1568 (and Vigor’s Lenten sermons in 1572), preachers prepared their audience to the possibility of a violent action that would be the total eradication of the unbelievers, and covered themselves despite everything they said with the necessity to obey the king’s orders”.⁴⁸ The Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre was the unleashing of God’s anger as imagined by the people. The collective impression was that God’s anger would otherwise be unleashed otherwise on the entire realm. In 1571, Artus Desiré published a tract titled *The origin and source of all the ills of this world*; it dealt with familial disobedience, insubordinate servants, and “the visitations of God toward His Christian people with war, pestilence and famine”.⁴⁹ Desiré writes that France was living through “a miserable time when all the demons are unleashed everywhere in our kingdom of France” and that people must take notice of this if they do not wish to be collectively swallowed up by God’s legitimate fury.⁵⁰ The question of why God was furious was answered by Desiré when he singled out the schismatic Huguenots who were provoking God’s punishments on the people.

The fundamental message transmitted through the religious discourse of Catholic preachers and writers was the projection of a deep consciousness of guilt, what Robert Scribner calls “apocalyptic angst”⁵¹ and what Denis Crouzet defines as a “feeling of

⁴⁸ Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu*, Tome 2, p. 85.

⁴⁹ Artus Desiré, *L'Origine et source de tous les maux de ce monde, par l'incorrection des pères et mères envers leurs enfans et de l'inobédience d'iceux. Ensemble de la trop grande familiarité et liberté donnée aux servans et servantes, avec un petit discours de la visitation de Dieu envers son peuple chrétien, par affliction de guerre, peste et famine* (Paris: Pour Jehan Dallier, 1571).

⁵⁰ Desiré, *L'Origine*, p. 2.

⁵¹ Scribner, “Anticlericalism in the Cities”, p. 153.

eschatological punishment.”⁵² Crouzet establishes a relationship between the royal violence in the assassination of the Huguenot leaders, the corresponding popular violence in the massacre of Huguenots populations and the “prophetic discourse” of Catholic preachers who actively promoted the violent extermination of Protestant heretics within the kingdom:

Parisians were probably relieved and not surprised to hear cries throughout the night of the Saint-Bartholomew that the king had ordered to kill all the heretics, at least that is what they believed. (...) This is why I am sceptical towards the idea of an insurrection in Paris of August 23, I lean rather towards a phenomenon of prophetic fermentation, of a collective contraction around a diffuse and distressing presentiment, which determined, in a context of immense collective guilt, a true expectation of the triggering of royal violence.⁵³

In Désiré’s pamphlet, the toleration of heresy, religious and civil authorities who led unholy lifestyles, monarchs who acted against the opinion of the Church, and everyone who acted against God’s teachings were responsible for God’s anger. For Catholic preachers, the violent extermination of demonic heretics was the moral solution to calming God’s fury. From this point of view, the brutal violence of the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in Paris was not spontaneous, but an expression of a latent tension. The event of the massacre itself was probably spontaneous in the sense that it was not planned, but its violence, and through it the desire to redeem the kingdom and its people, had been cultivated and encouraged by Catholic preachers who had been channeling the eschatological feelings of fear and guilt in their audience towards demonic heretics since before the civil war had even broken out. The assassination of the Huguenot leaderships was taken as a permission, or even an order, by the Catholic

⁵² Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, tome 2, p. 93.

⁵³ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, tome 2, p. 93.

population of Paris to exterminate, and put into action the violence of God, towards the demonic heretics who threatened the kingdom's physical and spiritual survival. This pattern reflects the demonological frame of mind and the pattern established in the fifteenth century against Waldensian heretics and demonic witches. In the way that the demonizing discourse in mendicant sermons was projected onto practitioners of magic causing harm within their communities in the fifteenth century, the Protestant insurrectionists and their acts of desecrating icons were used as proof of their involvement in a demonic conspiracy against Christianity and the French crown in the sixteenth century. Exterminating demonic Huguenots during the French Reformation accomplished the same feeling of being freed from demonic assaults as was burning witches in the fifteenth century.

5.3 – The Massacre of Bordeaux: Violent Discourse vs. Violent Massacres

The methodological difficulty in defining the relationship between religious discourse and religious violence can be illustrated by analysing the subsequent Huguenot massacre in Bordeaux. The city of Bordeaux followed suit when its Catholic population massacred its Protestants inhabitants on October 3, 1572.⁵⁴ Until that point, the governor of the city, Charles Baron de Monferrand and the *procureur general*, Roman Mulet, had opposed any kind of violence.⁵⁵ However, according to documents analysed by Maurice Wilkinson, the people of Bordeaux had been long prepared for a

⁵⁴ Henri Hausser gives the date of September 29, 1572 for the beginning of the massacre, immediately after a sermon preached by the Jesuit preacher Émond Auger, see "Le père Émond Auger et le massacre de Bordeaux 1572", *Bulletin - Société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*, LX (1911), p. 294. However, Michel Pernot gives October 3, 1572 as the date of the massacre in Bordeaux, see "L'univers spirituel du père Émond Auger, S.J., confesseur du roi Henri III", *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, no. 194 (1989), p. 105.

⁵⁵ A. Lynn Martin, *Henry III and the Jesuit Politicians* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1973), p. 47.

massacre by “seditious preachers”.⁵⁶ The fragmented records of the Parlement of Bordeaux published by Wilkinson are convincing. Even in 1570, the court of the Parlement had to crack down on a provocative Catholic preacher named Lagoudine. These documents inform us on the fanatical tone of Catholic preaching in Bordeaux.

Initially, the sermons of the Jesuit preacher Émond Auger appear to be the indisputable main trigger in the massacre of the Huguenots in Bordeaux, five weeks after they had been purged in Paris and when popular religious violence was dying down across the kingdom of France. Émond Auger was an itinerant Jesuit preacher who arrived in Bordeaux in 1571 to establish a Jesuit college, and he succeeded despite the opposition of the city authorities. On Easter 1572, he preached an incredibly popular sermon to a crowd said to number 17,000.⁵⁷ Then, on August 18, Auger obtained the necessary funding to make the college operational. The college opened its doors with eight classes in October. It was between those last two dates, in “a moment of triumph for Auger”, that the massacre occurred in Bordeaux.⁵⁸

However, the analysis is impeded by a series of Catholic apologists who have successively chronicled the massacre of Bordeaux and portrayed Émond Auger as a pious priest who saved several Huguenots that took refuge at the Jesuit College to save themselves from being massacred. This potential historical distortion culminated in the writings of the Catholic priest Henri Fouqueray (1860-1927).⁵⁹ On the massacre in

⁵⁶ Maurice Wilkinson, “Documents Illustrating the Wars of Religion, 1569–1573” in *The English Historical Review*, vol. 26, no. 101 (Jan. 1911), pp. 127-138.

⁵⁷ Henri Fouqueray, *Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus en France, des origines à la suppression (1528-1762)* (Paris: A. Picart et fils, 1910-1925), p. 518.

⁵⁸ Henri Hausser, “Le Père Émond Auger”, p. 293.

⁵⁹ Cited above, Henri Fouqueray published *Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus en France, des origines à la suppression (1528-1762)* in five volumes between 1910 and 1925.

Bordeaux, Fouquieray wrote that “During these painful hours, the fathers of the company of Jesus had a very charitable and apostolic role”.⁶⁰ Fouquieray was directly contradicting contemporary historical sources of the massacre, especially the French Reformed theologian Simon Goulart (1543-1628). Goulart published *Mémoires de l'Etat de France sous Charles IX* in 1577, not long after the massacre in Bordeaux. Goulart held the Jesuits specifically responsible for the massacre and Émond Auger in particular. The historical disagreement concerning the responsibility of the Jesuits and Émond Auger concentrates on the words attributed to Auger during one of his sermons in Bordeaux on the Feast Day of Saint Michael, which was September 29, three days before the massacre. On the Jesuits and Émond Auger’s role in instigating the massacre, Goulart wrote that:

(...) In many cities, they have followed the example of Paris: this leads to believe that it would also occur in Bordeaux. The reason being that the people had been long prepared by a seditious preacher named Émond Augier of the order of the Jesuits (...) These Jesuits having thus installed themselves within Bordeaux, have not stopped, little by little, to incite sedition and to trouble the hearts of those that heard them preaching daily: even the aforementioned Émond Augier (a proper instrument) shrieked every day in person and shouted horribly the indifference and lateness of the people in Bordeaux, and the cowardliness of the governor, to the point of saying that his [the governor] sword was only ever in his scabbard and that he fell asleep next to his whore.

(...)

The day that we call the Feast of St. Michael, speaking of Angels by which God executes his threats and his vengeance, he [Émond Auger] shouted saying: “Who has executed the Judgement of God in Paris? The Angel of God. Who has executed it in Orleans? The Angel of God. Who has executed in in many other cities of the kingdom? The Angel of God. Who will execute it in the city of Bordeaux? It will be the Angel of God”. Thus, all the preaching and discourse full of attacks, did not tend to another purpose, and as

⁶⁰ Fouquieray, *Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus en France*, p. 629.

much in public as in private he solicited incessantly the men to do in Bordeaux the same that had been done in Paris.⁶¹

This second-hand account of Auger's sermons encouraging the extermination of Protestant heretics in Bordeaux reflects the moral notion that the massacre in Paris on August 24, 1572, was a form of divine justice. Paris had been purified from its enemies through God's Judgement. The sermon implies that if the "Angel of God" had accomplished God's Judgment through the massacre in Paris, then by extension, the Huguenots were perceived as demonic heretics. The massacre of the Huguenots in Bordeaux and the other cities in France represented another historical phase. This second phase of violent massacres is charged with the notion that the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre had not been sufficient in totally removing demonic influences infecting the kingdom. The religious and moral message conveyed in Auger's sermon is that if the Catholic population in Bordeaux exterminated the Huguenots, they would be further accomplishing God's Judgement, just as it had been done in Paris.

⁶¹ Simon Goulart, *Mémoires de l'estat de France sous Charles IX contenant les choses les plus notables, faites et publiées tant par les catholiques que par ceux de la religion, depuis le troisième édit de pacification fait au mois d'Aoust 1570 jusques au règne de Henry troisieme, & reduits en trois volumes (...) Tome 1, Seconde partie/second part* (Meidelbourd: Henri Wolf, 1578), pp. 528-531: En plusieurs villes on avait suivi l'exemple de Paris: ce qui faisait bien croire qu'il n'en fallait pas moins attendre à bordeaux. Car le peuple y était de longue main préparée par un prêcheur séditieux nommé Émond Augier de l'ordre des Jésuites. (...) Ces Jésuites s'étants ainsi insinué dans Bordeaux ils ne cessaient d'inciter peu à peu à sédition et trouble les cœurs de ceux qui pratiquaient journellement. Même ledit Émond Augier (instrument à ce propre) tonnait horriblement, lançait aigrement la nonchalance et la tardiveté de ceux de Bordeaux, et la pusillanimité du gouverneur, jusqu'à dire que son épée tenait au fourreau et qu'il s'endormait près de sa putain. Le jour que l'on appelle la fête de S. Michel, parlant des Anges par lesquels Dieu exécute ses menaces et ses vengeances, il criait disant: Qui a exécuté le jugement de Dieu à Paris? L'Ange de Dieu. Qui l'a exécuté à Orléans? L'Ange de Dieu. Qui l'a exécuté dans plusieurs autres villes du Royaume? L'Ange de Dieu. Qui l'exécutera dans la ville de Bordeaux? Ce sera l'Ange de Dieu. Bref, tous ces prêches et discours pleins d'invectives, ne tendaient à autre but, et tant en public qu'en privé il sollicitait incessamment les hommes à faire à Bordeaux comme il avait fait à Paris.

Goulart goes on to explain that governor Montferrand had initially been reluctant to carry out any violence against the Huguenots of Bordeaux. He had promised that they would suffer no harm and took money from them. After the massacre in Paris, the governor “prevented and forbade the practice of their religion”. This was in fact obeying the royal decree following the massacre in Paris when the king forbade all Huguenot assemblies.⁶² Goulart explains that no one could leave the city gates without a proper identification. The *lieutenant-général* of the king for the territory of Guyenne, named Montpezat, arrived in Bordeaux with royal letters relating that the armies of the Catholic duke of Guise and those of the Protestants had been engaged in ferocious battles, but that this did not impact the royal edict of pacification and that it was still in force.⁶³ However, Goulart portrays the political machinations between the king’s lieutenant Montpezat and governor Montferrand as:

He [Montpezat] made a deal under the table with the governor that the massacre was going to happen, for which he was incessantly solicited by that forceful Jesuit, of whom we spoke previously, who also never ceased to announce this in person. Like a funeral crow, he threatened every day those of the Religion of a coming ruin and extermination that if they did not join the ranks of the Roman Church and if they did not convert, that they would not be saved in time and they would not be received. With these many persuasive methods of spreading fear, [they] were shaken, and at the request of their family and friends, who showed them the imminent danger, they made pleas to the Roman Church.

After the three days of massacre in Bordeaux of October 3, 4 and 5, Goulart writes that

The Jesuit Emond Auger gave his sermons in the form of attacks, not only against the living of the Religion, but as a leprechaun making war against the dead, and consistently making threats to frighten the people, without giving any release to the consciences.⁶⁴

⁶² *Archives Historiques du département de la Gironde*, vol. XX (Bordeaux: 1880), p. 155.

⁶³ *Archives Historiques du département de la Gironde*, vol. XX (Bordeaux: 1880), p. 155.

⁶⁴ Both quotations, Goulart, *Mémoires historiques*, vol. 1, pp. 530-531: Ce Jésuite Emond passait ses

The estimates for the number of Huguenots killed in the massacre in Bordeaux figures around 250.⁶⁵ Fouquieray cites Jean de Gauffreteau, a sixteenth-century French Catholic chronicler to discredit accusations against Auger and the Jesuits for the responsibility of the massacre in Bordeaux. Gauffreteau writes: “In the narration of this massacre, and notably on this particular subject [the Jesuits], do not trust the book written by heretics who entitled it the *Martyrology* because they establish in this many things that were never thought and even less implemented, for thus, when they speak of the massacre”.⁶⁶

There are two main points used by Catholics chroniclers to refute Protestant portrayals of the massacre in Bordeaux that painted the Jesuits and Auger as the main culprits of the bloodshed. First, as Gauffreteau insists, Auger supposedly never preached the words that Goulart attributes to him. Secondly, many sources concur that a significant number of Huguenots were saved from being massacred by Auger himself

sermons en invectives, non seulement contre les vivants de la Religion, mais comme un lutin faisant la guerre aux morts et entremêlait toujours des menaces pour effrayer les personnes, sans donner de relâche aucune aux consciences, Il (Montpezat) brassait par dessous main avec le gouverneur que le massacre s’y fit, de quoi il était incessamment sollicité par ce Jésuite forcené, dont a été parlé ci-dessus, qui aussi ne cessait de tempêter en chaire et comme un funeste corbeau menaçait tout les jours ceux de la Religion d’une prochaine ruine et extermination, s’ils ne se rangeaient pas de bonne heure au giron de l’Église Romaine, que s’ils ne s’avançaient ils n’y arriveraient pas à temps et n’y seront plus reçus. Par ce moyen plusieurs émus de crainte furent ébranlés et à la prière de leurs parents et amis, qui leur montraient le danger imminent, firent protestations en l’Église Romaine.

⁶⁵ Wilkinson, “Documents illustrating the Wars of Religion, 1569–1573”, p. 129.

⁶⁶ Jean de Gauffreteau, *Chronique bordelaise*, tome 1 (Bordeaux: Chez Lefévre, 1877-1878), p. 170. Gauffreteau is referencing the *Martyrologie* written by the French Calvinist Jean Crespin, who died in exile in Geneva in 1572, the same year of the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. *Histoire des martyrs* by Crespin by was first published in 1554, received many successive editions and titles, and was re-edited and augmented by Goulart in 1578, who added his account of the Massacre in Bordeaux. See Gerard Moreau, “La Saint-Barthélémy, le *Martyrologue* de Jean Crespin et Simon Goulart” in *Bulletin de la Société du Protestantisme Français: Divers aspect de la Réforme aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Juillet-Août-Septembre, 1975), pp. 11-36.

when they took refuge in the new Jesuit college of Bordeaux. One of Auger's biographers, the Catholic priest Nicolas Bailly believed that:

(...) the carnage of Saint Bartholomew began in Paris by order of the king, and undertaken to repress the boldness and sanctimony of heretics. (...) Far from it that Auger was the author or the monger of this massacre in Bordeaux: we can easily prove that he saved the life of a number of persons, who, by fear of death, had taken refuge under his protection in the college.⁶⁷

The first point is problematic because there are no corroborating sources that can be cross-referenced with Goulart to confirm what Auger supposedly preached in Bordeaux on September 29, 1572.⁶⁸ However problematic, for Henri Hausser this is not convincing enough to dismiss Goulart's account out of hand based on the opposing words of Catholic apologists who were pursuing their own agenda with counter accusations of dishonesty on the part of Protestants. Moreover, even if Auger's sermon cannot be corroborated, the significant aspect of Goulart's account is that the author held the Jesuit preacher responsible for provoking anti-Huguenot passions through his demonizing rhetoric and the resulting violence of the massacre against the Protestant population in Bordeaux. Why blame the Catholic preacher, when the authorities of the city or the Catholic population could be directly blamed for allowing and participating in the massacre? In fact, the second point can be easily explained in the context of Auger's career and works. Auger had a reputation of forcing Huguenots to convert to

⁶⁷ Nicolas Bailly, *Historia vitae r. patris Emundi Augerii* (Paris: Apud Sebastianum Cramoisy ... et Gabrielem Cramoisy, 1652), p. 135. Another of Auger's biographers in the eighteenth century, the Catholic priest Jean Dorigny seems horrified by the massacre of Bordeaux: "Heaven does not bless such a violent remedy and its memory alone still inspires some horror". In *La Vie du P. Émond Auger* (Lyon, 1716), p. 206. However, Dorigny absolves Auger from any responsibility: "Auger has been greatly taxed to have excited the people and the governors to obey the orders of the court with more accuracy that they were doing. I do not know of this fact in particular", p. 279.

⁶⁸ Hausser, "Le Père Émond Auger", p. 297.

Catholicism under pain of death. He had been the personal confessor to King Henri III. In 1568, when the third civil war began, Émond Auger dedicated a treatise to King Charles IX: *Le Pédagogue d'armes, pour instruire un prince chrétien à bien entreprendre et heureusement achever une bonne guerre (The pedagogy of arms to instruct a Christian prince to well undertake and fortunately achieve a good war)*.⁶⁹ Auger echoes Simon Vigor's uncompromising solution to the Protestant problem by praising the idea of war itself, especially wars against heretics that are fought over the question of religious truth. The king is duty bound to reduce or to pursue heretics who are "such contemptable, the most pernicious and infernal satellites of lies". The king should not be concerned with his promises of peace inscribed in his own edicts of pacification because they were obtained through the "craftiness of bad councillors".⁷⁰ Auger's main argument is that two religions cannot coexist within the same kingdom.

The reasons provided to support this argument are formulated with demonological terminology in Auger's own writings: "So to conclude this matter, Scripture shows that there cannot be two kinds of religion, knowing that one is of God and the other of the devil".⁷¹ The Huguenots reveal their allegiance to the devil through acts of idolatry. Calvinists profane the "sacrifice" (i.e., the Eucharist) to prevent believers from receiving this sacrament. Some Catholics waver when they do nothing to prevent these acts: "keeping their two feet in the stirrups. Because the ones and the others have provoked, as we see, the ire of God for us to be rigorously chastised, for the insults and the songs

⁶⁹ Émond Auger, *Le Pédagogue d'armes (...)* (S. Nivelle: 1568).

⁷⁰ Auger, *Le Pédagogue d'armes*, p. 9.

⁷¹ Émond Auger, *De la vraye, réelle et corporelle présence de Jésus-Christ au Saint Sacrement de l'autel* (Lyon: P. L'Huillier, 1566), p. 85.

that are made to the saint religion and sacrifice like these aforementioned”.⁷² This rhetoric echoes François Le Picart’s sermons a few decades earlier, which persistently defended Catholic mass and the ‘true presence’ in the Eucharist, which was used as counter-evidence to show that the Huguenots really are demonic.

Auger’s argumentation in his tract *De la vraye, réelle et corporelle présence de Jésus-Christ au Saint Sacrement de l'autel / Of the true, real and corporal presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament of the altar* is a systematic defence of Catholic sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the doctrine of transubstantiation, in a strategy designed to disprove Protestant ideas. Protestants condemn themselves and reveal their demonic nature in their continued attempt to desecrate the sacred Host, “which they know the devil, through his ministers, attempts by force to profane, mock, and make it abominable, by instead of the honourable one, substitute it with an ordinary piece of bread”.⁷³ Another way in which Calvinists demonstrate their satanic nature is in the imitation of the Last Supper. Catholics perform the sacrament of the Host with the bread and the wine in honour of Christ’s sacrifice, while Calvinists perform their ritual to worship the devil:

And St. Paul has said as much, ‘I will take the Chalice of God and of the devils to the opposite, as if, by that only word Cup, or Chalice, is there recognition of a sacrifice. Otherwise, it would be to participate in the Chalice of Satan, if there was no oblation? (...) But this is so evident, that Calvin has been constrained to write, that Christ (according to the act of request) tasted the Cup, and again repeated this observation a second time.’⁷⁴

⁷² Auger, *De la vraye*, p. 85.

⁷³ Auger, *De la vraye*, p. 189.

⁷⁴ Auger, *De la vraye*, p. 162.

This divisive point of theology is central to Auger's argument. The Host must be consecrated by a Catholic priest for it to be a sacrament, a true devotion to God in honour of Christ's sacrifice. Otherwise, "without His true body and blood", the Protestant ritual of the Last Supper is really a satanic ritual: "St. Paul says that we commune with the devils, by eating things sacrificed to them", as opposed to the consecration of the Host.⁷⁵ It is clear that Protestants are in error which is shown by how much they disagree with each other (Lutherans, Zwinglians, Calvinists), but everything they do is to ruin the world. The greatest hope would be their "entire conversion and union with us", but this is made impossible because of their error and that their only care is for themselves.⁷⁶

In the face of such religious extremism, it is easy to imagine how the French Calvinists of Bordeaux tried to save themselves by promising Auger that they would convert rather than face the Catholic mobs of the city.⁷⁷ Even if the Protestant martyrologist Goulart was exaggerating, what is significant is that the Huguenots held Auger responsible for inflaming the population's anti-Protestant passions. Based on Auger's own career and writings, he has been described by modern historians as "a fire-breathing radical Catholic zealot in the early years of the religious wars".⁷⁸ Auger's sermon on the Angel executing God's Judgment on the Huguenots through a massacre describes the religious conflict with demonological terminology and is consistent with his own documented rhetoric. The religious conflict is a battle between God and the

⁷⁵ Auger, *De la vraye*, p. 224.

⁷⁶ Auger, *De la vraye*, p. 119.

⁷⁷ Hausser, "Le Père Émond Auger", p. 301-303.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Pearl, *Crime of Crimes: Demonology and Politics in France 1560-1620* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), p. 21; See also, A. Lynn Martin, *Henry III and the Jesuit Politicians* (Geneva: Droz, 1973).

devil. This demonological aspect is consistent with Auger's own written works and other Jesuit teachings during this period.

One of the most famous examples of this type of religious line of thinking was expressed by the Spanish Jesuit Jean Maldonat (1533-1583) who framed the battle against French Protestants in specific demonological terminology as already defined in the fifteenth century. Maldonat taught theology, probably to Jesuit initiates, at the University of Paris from 1563 to 1575 and his teachings had a profound impact on the spread of demonological notions and the association of heretics and witches with the devil:

Maldonat's influence was powerful. For what he presented in a thorough, respectable and scholarly form, was a detailed diabolization of Protestant heretics. The diabolization of heresy in the 1571-72 academic year in Maldonat's lectures must be included among the factors contributing to the fury of the popular pogrom phase of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris (...).⁷⁹

Jonathan Pearl establishes a connection between the dissemination of the close identification of heresy with the devil and the violence committed against Protestant heretics. Maldonat taught his theology students that: "demons maintain their existence within heretics".⁸⁰ Maldonat cites a long list of historical events involving heretics and witches, some biblical and some more recent, to explain why the kingdom of France was in the grips of demonic heretics and witches. Maldonat cites the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the witch hunts against the *Vaudois* during the fifteenth century to explain the origins of Protestant heresy in sixteenth-century France. In fact, these witches and heretics still exist in secret: "Of this there is a strongly sufficient witness Jacob Sprenger

⁷⁹ Pearl, *Crime of Crimes*, p. 68.

⁸⁰ Jean Maldonat, *Traité des Anges et Démons (...) mis en françois par Maistre François de la Borie* (Paris: Chez François Haluy, 1605), p. 157.

[from] Germany, who lived in that time and who wrote a whole book on the subject. In the past, very close to the border of France no one is unaware that in the mountains of the Alps there was (and today still) as many witches as there are women. Vaudois heretics remain there hidden even until today”.⁸¹ Maldonat attributes the historical origin and the subsequent proliferation of Calvinism in France to these demonic witches and heretics. Facetiously, Maldonat declares that: “I would not want any Calvinist to be offended by what I hear said, to which certainly I would rather be the author of salvation than of scandal. Moreover, I certainly estimate that these illusions of the devils which are now worked against us, directly come from Lake Geneva from where are come to us their heresies”.⁸² Geneva is located in the Swiss region where inquisitors aggressively pursued ‘demonized’ practitioners of magic and Waldensian heretics during the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century, Geneva became a Calvinist stronghold to where French Huguenots fled in order to escape execution and persecution.⁸³

There are striking similarities between Auger’s sermon on the massacres of the Huguenots being executed by the Angel of God and Maldonat’s theological lectures. Maldonat taught that those who “are good in God’s eyes, are like an Angel of God”. God said: “Go ethereal angels to the earth, injure and tear”. Angels are “spiritual ambassadors” and “spiritual administrators”.⁸⁴ In Psalm 103 of the Old Testament, God

⁸¹ Maldonat, *Traité des Anges et Démons*, p. 156. “De ceci peut être témoin fort suffisant Jacques Sprenger Allemand, & qui vivait de ce temps-là: lequel en a écrit un livre entier. Jadis plus près de France personne n’ignore qu’aux monts Appennins il n’y eut (& encore aujourd’hui) autant de sorcières qu’il y a de femmes. Et c’est d’autant que les Vaudois hérétiques y sont demeurés cachés”.

⁸² Maldonat, *Traité des Anges et Démons*, p. 156.

⁸³ William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 114-115.

⁸⁴ Maldonat uses both the French term *ambassadeur* and the Latin term *legat*, meaning “dispatched ambassador or emissary”.

sent an angel “who is all fortunate virtue” to Moses in order “to shut the jaws of the lions”. The angel’s actions prevented Daniel from being insulted and offended by the lions, a metaphorical image for French Calvinists.⁸⁵ As is made clear in the New Testament, angels move toward and serve Jesus Christ: “the Angels of God will never push away or be pushed away [from Christ]. They will go to the eternal fire, those who are allied to the devil and his angels”.⁸⁶ From the seven reasons that explain why angels exist, the seventh reason is to reward the virtuous and to punish the guilty, “as ministers of God, guiding the good ones to the place of reward and the bad ones to the place of torment”, all in accordance to God’s Judgement.⁸⁷ Maldonat’s demonstration combines theology with a religious history of heresy to formulate a coherent demonological theory concerning the existence of demonic heretics and witches in sixteenth-century France. As shown by Pearl, Maldonat’s lectures reflect the Jesuit order’s religious views in the context of the French Reformation.⁸⁸

It is not clear whether Augier was directly aware of Maldonat’s message, but for Pearl, Auger’s sermon on the ‘Angel of God’ executing God’s judgement in reference to the massacre of the Huguenots in Paris reflects a familiar and similar tone to Maldonat’s teachings.⁸⁹ Both these Jesuits and their rhetoric reflected their order’s eschatological view that the religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics was really a battle between God and the devil. Auger’s sermons praised the massacre in Paris and were instrumental in inciting the popular massacre in Bordeaux. Despite Auger being

⁸⁵ Maldonat, *Traité des Anges et Démons*, pp. 2-3.

⁸⁶ Maldonat, *Traité des Anges et Démons*, p. 7.

⁸⁷ Maldonat, *Traité des Anges et Démons*, p. 125.

⁸⁸ Pearl, *Crime of Crimes*, p. 62.

⁸⁹ Pearl, *Crime of Crimes*, p. 70.

absolved by Catholic apologists seeking to sanitize Catholic responsibility for the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, Garrison-Estèbe argues that "[Catholic chroniclers] systematically neglected the role of popular monks preaching the holocaust of heretics".⁹⁰ Catholic preachers could sustain the façade of moral religious superiority by maintaining a kind of 'plausible deniability' in their sermons. They did not explicitly demand that the audience members go out and cause the violent death of heretics, but this is what the audience could and would naturally infer through a consistent dehumanizing rhetoric that verbalized God's command to exterminate all the Protestant heretics.

The historical problem of causality concerning discourse and practice becomes solvable when the context of the discourse points to a clear outcome. As framed in Catholic sermons preached in sixteenth-century France, the complete violent extermination of demonic Protestant heretics appears to be the only compelling outcome. However persuasive, and their sermons appear to be quite persuasive, Catholic preachers told their audience even before 1562, when the civil war began, that God wanted heresy eradicated from the kingdom. François Le Picart, accounts of the Huguenot massacre in Sens, Simon Vigor and Emond Auger collectively preached a message governed by an eschatological ultimatum: to destroy heresy and expel its originator, the devil, through the violent eradication of the Huguenots from the kingdom or bear the ultimate punishment of God's legitimate fury when France and its people are consumed in the resulting apocalypse. Crouzet describes the mindset behind the violence of the massacres as: "Those acts recover from the body of the enemy a

⁹⁰ Garrison Estebe, *Tocsin pour un massacre: La saison des Saint-Barthelemy* (Paris: Centurion, 1968), p. 43.

prophetic knowledge, types of revelations, an underlying intention, but it also reveals the origins of their eschatological anguish. (...) The violence and the signs it inscribes on the ‘others’ are a mechanism that allows the individual to regain control of themselves”.⁹¹ This eschatological anguish became amplified to the point of producing a “pious disenchantment of the sacred” and the violence then allowed the individual to dispose of their anguish by fusing their acts with the “sacralising violence of God”. In the same way the Protestant doctrine of free salvation⁹² emancipated the Christian from the anguish of their salvation, the collective violence perpetrated by Catholics freed them of their anguish by accomplishing God’s divine vision for them. The violence of the massacres and the gruesome mutilation done to the bodies of Protestants underlines the projection of deep internal demonic fears. The collective violence was a reaction to a feeling of being attacked on multiple levels, physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. Catholics were not only physically purifying their religious communities through collective violence, they were spiritually purifying themselves of demonic forces through ‘godly’ massacres. The physical violence was a means for Catholics to extract the devil as well as religious perversion from their communities, and also from themselves on an emotional level, by projecting them on the Protestant ‘other’ who was corrupted and devoted to Satan. The body of the enemy becomes a place of religious deviance and deformity that were ‘exorcised’ from Catholics believers through their acts

⁹¹ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, Tome I, p. 300-301.

⁹² The doctrine of free salvation or penal substitution is a Protestant theory of atonement and holds that Christ’s sacrifice allows for the payment of the individual sins of Christians. Divine forgiveness and salvation are not automatic but given to those who have faith and thus saves them from God’s wrath and punishment. This idea was a contentious and debated topic during the Reformation. See A. J. Wallace and R. D. Rusk, *Moral Transformation: The Original Christian Paradigm of Salvation* (New Zealand: Bridgehead, 2011), p. 295.

of violence: “The ‘other’ is not only the object on which the symbolic language is inscribed, they are the symbol”.⁹³ The massacres of Protestants and the desecration of their bodies imitated in the most extreme fashion the sacrilegious acts Protestants had been perpetrating against holy Catholic symbols. The sacking of churches, the destruction of religious icons and the relics of saints, which for Catholics provided a tangible connection with the divine, were proof of the Huguenots’ demonic agency.

Catholic discourse in the sixteenth-century France repeatedly reinforced the notion of the ‘demonic Huguenots’ and this message resonated on an emotional level with the feeling of a continued pervasive eschatological and demonic threat. As we have seen in the sermons preached in sixteenth-century France, Catholic preachers literally associated the devil with Protestant heresy. Natalie Zemon Davis describes the origin of the pejorative use of the term ‘Huguenots’ to designate French Calvinists. In the city of Tours, *le roi Huguet* (King Huguet) was the name given to ghosts who had escaped purgatory to haunt their victims at night. ‘Huguenots’ was then used to refer to Protestants who held nocturnal meetings where they performed acts of sexual deviance and orgies: “Protestants were, thus, as sinister as the spirits of the dead, whom one hoped to settle in their tombs on All Souls’ Day.”⁹⁴ This projection of Satan on the ‘Protestant other’ was expressed commonly and explicitly by Catholics in Reformation France: in 1560 in the region of Metz, Catholic preachers proclaimed “that the ministers had horns on the head” and that “the sand clock that was attached close to the flesh was a familiar spirit, that the ministers turned and stirred to charm those who listened to

⁹³ Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu*, tome I, p. 301.

⁹⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth Century France”, in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), p. 158.

them”, a reference associating the devil with both heresy and witchcraft.⁹⁵ In Amiens, on Good Friday 1564, two quarrelling women insulted each other in front of a stall selling fish: one tells the other “I would rather see a devil”, and expressively made the sign of the cross while facing the other woman as if she was effectively exorcising a demonic presence, to which the other responded “If I see that, I will make you prove well what you say, are you saying that I am a Lutheran?” Again in Amiens, a Protestant minister named Thomas Chesneau made an official complaint for having been “greatly injured” Wednesday August 29, 1565, having been publicly insulted as an “evil apostate and a devil and that his wife was a whore and an evil doxy”, an accusation that again combines devil worship with sexual depravity in connection to Protestant heresy.⁹⁶

All these examples confirm in the atmosphere of collective apprehension that Catholics believed they really came face to face with the devil when they encountered a Huguenot in the literal sense that the Jesuit Maldonat taught: “demons maintain their existence within heretics”.⁹⁷ This demonological lens was also disseminated in Auger’s sermons on the Angel of God accomplishing God’s Judgment. The unequivocal nature of religious discourse masks the uneven reality of everyday religious life, whether a person was a French Catholic or a French Protestant. How religious ideas were received, interpreted and acted on are found in the acts of violence they induced. By reporting the actions committed during occurrences of collective religious violence back to its religious discourse helps to makes sense of these sermons as well as place the violence

⁹⁵ Théodore de Bèze, *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au Royaume de France, en la quelle est descrite au vray la renaissance et accroissement d’icelle depuis l’an M.D.XXI (1521)* (A. Anvers: De l’imprimerie de Jean Remy, 1580), vol. III, p. 450.

⁹⁶ Georges Durand, *Département de la Somme. Ville d’Amiens. Inventaire sommaire des archives communales antérieures à 1790* (Amiens: Impr. de Piteux frères, 1897), série FF, vol. 7, pp. 828-829.

⁹⁷ Maldonat, *Traité des Anges et Démons*, p. 157.

within its narrative framework. Both the religious discourse and the violence become more understandable when contextualized together. For the historian, sixteenth-century French Catholic sermons then become the historical expressions of the language of religious violence. Preachers articulated into religious vocabulary what the acts of religious violence were saying. These sermons do not help to explain why so many ordinary people as well as a significant portion of the French aristocracy had converted to Calvinism and did not convert back when they heard Catholic sermons, which painting them as minions of the devil and the cause of all evil in France. On the other hand, French Catholic discourse during the French Reformation and Wars of Religion betrays itself as uncompromising and as a reflection of what ideas were expressed and put into action through collective religious violence, God's violence. As formulated by these preachers and then literally displayed by the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, religion was all or nothing, God or the devil, salvation or hell, existence or annihilation. There was no room for equivocation without being massacred or executed, or at the very least accused of heresy and demonic corruption. The beliefs disseminated in Catholic sermons concerning the devil's continued attempts to destroy Christianity in Reformation France will be further explored in the next chapter by analysing occurrences of demonic possession and the connection between Protestant rebellions and the persecution of witches.

Chapter 6 – Preaching against Heresy: Witchcraft Persecutions in Toulouse in 1562 and Nicole Obry’s Demonic Possession in 1566

What drove the escalation of prosecution of witches from individual cases into mass panics in the sixteenth century was the belief in a sectarian conspiracy between witches and demons. For Gary K. Waite, “the Reformation on the whole made the diabolical and conspiratorial aspects of witchcraft more credible” which was a “precipitating cause” in reviving the European witch-hunts in the 1560s.¹ Both elite and popular fears about demonic witchcraft converged at the judicial level, since both rulers and people wanted to rid their communities of religious and social deviants, personified in the extreme by the early modern witch.² This shared motive was a necessary element in initiating witch hunts, because they usually failed without both popular support and institutional agency.

As seen in chapters 4 and 5 above, sectarian violence in the sixteenth century between French Protestants and Catholics has been closely analysed by Denis Crouzet who concludes that: “the uncontrollable impulse or the action of violence is the exteriorisation of the fears and the consequence of a precipitous culture which either brought on or imposed violence; the act of violence is a cultural code and symbol from which it is possible to extract its subjective elements and thus the religious crisis’ underlying causes”.³ For Crouzet, religious violence is a form of religious speech. In his

¹ Gary K. Waite, “Irrelevant Interruption or Precipitating Cause? The Sixteenth-Century Reformation(s) and the Revival of the European Witch Hunts”, in Martine Ostorero, Georg Modestin and Kathrin Utz Tremp (eds.), *Chasses aux sorcières et démonologie: entre discours et pratiques (XIVe-XVIIe siècles)* (Lausanne: Frieze, 2010), p. 242.

² Gary K. Waite, “Irrelevant interruption”, p. 230, and *Eradicating the Devil’s Minions: Anabaptists and Witches in Reformation Europe, 1535-1600* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 195.

³ Denis Crouzet, “La violence au temps des troubles de religion”, *Histoire, économie et société*, no. 4, (1989), p. 509.

extensive survey of European witch trials, Julian Goodare contextualizes the beginning of the early modern witch hunt within the broader period of religious conflicts during the Reformation. Goodare argues that the formation of the ‘Godly State’ furthered the efforts by the authorities to suppress religious deviance. The persecution of witches was part of a broader campaign to purify the realm of all of God’s enemies, and the state’s, in all their forms.⁴

This chapter will pursue this theme by analysing two case studies: first, religious preaching during a witch panic outside of Toulouse in the context of a Protestant riot in 1562, and second, the famous case of demonic possession of Nicole Obry in 1566 during the French Wars of Religion. This chapter argues that religious tensions and the demonizing rhetoric between French Protestants and Catholics triggered witchcraft persecutions and that public manifestations of demonic possession were a kind of live “sermon”. The Dominican priest Pierre de la Motte performed public exorcisms on Obry’s demons in front of large crowds. Despite the unfortunate absence of sources for La Motte’s sermons, he very likely gave sermons on the power of the consecrated Host to the crowds prior and after the live exorcisms, which are well documented. However, Obry’s performances during the exorcisms themselves expressing the demons’ torment when confronted with the consecrated Host was a live demonstration of the religious truth of the sacraments of the Catholic Church during a religious civil war. This kind of performance confirmed and sustained a rhetorical strategy established by preachers like Le Picart. His strategy had been to systematically defend the sacramental powers of Catholic priests while arguing that heretical Protestantism which rejected this doctrine

⁴ Julian Goodare, *The European Witch-Hunt* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 170.

was the 'religion of the devil'. Even earlier, mendicant preachers in the fifteenth century had associated Waldensian heretics and witches with the devil on the basis of the same religious argument concerning the rejection of Catholic sacraments. La Motte expressed this demonizing religious rhetoric to great effect in Obry's public exorcisms which combined all these elements for the crowds to witness firsthand. The exorcisms reflected the content of sermons by confirming the doctrine of transubstantiation while exposing French Calvinists as heretical devil-worshippers.

The failed Protestant insurrection in Toulouse and its resulting persecution, the witch hunt in nearby Courserans and the public exorcisms of Nicole Obry are expressions of demonism that articulate the language contained in the rhetoric of Catholic sermons. The persecution of Protestant insurrectionists and the purging of practitioners of magic in nearby Courserans are events that express and put into action the demonizing rhetoric of Catholic sermons. Prior to the riot, the Franciscan preacher Melchior de Flavin was delivering demonizing sermons in Toulouse against Protestantism and against royal policies of appeasement. While his sermons have not been preserved, his official grievance addressed to the sovereign likely reflects the content of his sermons. Flavin's *Remontrance* argues that Protestantism is a form of demonic corruption and that the toleration of heresy would bring down God's judgement and destroy the kingdom. The Huguenots confirmed that they were traitors in the minds of the judges of the Parlement of Toulouse when they attempted to take over the city, a notion promoted in Catholic sermons by the likes of Flavin. The witches of Couserans were accused of causing illness and murdering infants. The prosecution of practitioners of harmful magic in the context of confessional conflicts created a framework that

expressed together all the demonizing notions disseminated in Catholic sermons. The Huguenots were tearing apart the kingdom by taking up arms against the civil authorities and deviants in Courserans were killing children by means of witchcraft. This pattern reflects the gendering of heresy and witchcraft in which mostly men were accused of Protestant heresy in Toulouse while women were exclusively accused of crimes involving harmful magic in the diocese of Courserans.⁵ In the fifteenth century, the heretical Vaudois were accused of all these crimes together.

This analysis will conclude with the possession of Nicole Obry in 1566 to show how her public exorcisms were essentially dramatic forms of live sermons that demonstrated the religious truth of the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Dominican Pierre de la Motte exploited Obry's possession in order to display the power of the consecrated Host over Obry's demon in front of large crowds in an effort to show how Protestants were in league with the devil. The public exorcisms were a kind of live *exempla*, a form of Catholic propaganda that effectively displayed elite theological notions for a popular audience. The heretical attack on and rejection of the sacraments was articulated in elite theological discourse as demonic corruption through numerous sermons, religious treatises, and the scaffold where La Motte performed public exhortations and exorcisms that associated heretics and witches with the devil.

6.1 – Religious Tensions in Toulouse in 1562

The Protestant insurrection in Toulouse in May 1562 failed on a grand scale when the Huguenots attempted to seize control of the city in a coup. It is no surprise that the

⁵ Tamar Herzig, "Flies, Heretics and the Gendering of Witchcraft", *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2010), p. 53

judicial prosecutions which followed the failed rebellion coincided with the opening stages of the French Wars of Religion. In the aftermath of the riot, the Parlement of Toulouse executed more than 100 *seditieux* out of 1,128 suspects.⁶ Curiously, during the religious purge the Parlement upheld three death sentences for witchcraft against Catholic women during a period when it ordered women executed for Protestant sedition. The added element of witchcraft raises the question of the demonizing rhetoric of the Catholic clergy in respect to the Protestant threat. By analysing Catholic preaching in the context of the Protestant uprising, it will be possible to clarify how religion informed the judicial understanding of heresy and witchcraft as gendered variations of the same crime of sedition.⁷

The starting point for this line of inquiry was the controversial Franciscan preacher Melchior de Flavin. Some idea of his preaching style can fortunately be gained from a small work published in 1562 which probably originated as one of his sermons: *Remontrance de la vraye religion au Roy très chrétien Charles IX (Grievance on the true religion to the very Christian King Charles IX)*.⁸ Accounts concerning Flavin and the Toulouse insurrection are found in two contemporary Catholic and Protestant sources. From Protestants, the most detailed account came from the Calvinist theologian Theodore Beza who published the famous *Histoire ecclésiastique* in 1580, an

⁶ William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 222.

⁷ Laura Stokes has analysed the link between the persecution of witchcraft and other forms of criminal deviance (treason and sedition among them) to establish that witchcraft was not prosecuted in isolation of other crimes in an attempt to root out the evil of moral transgressions (sodomy, murder, blasphemy, thievery). See *Demons of Urban Reform: Early European Witch Trials and Criminal Justice, 1430-1530* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), p. 177.

⁸ Melchior de Flavin, *Remontrance de la vraye religion au Roy très chrétien Charles IX*, (Paris, 1562).

irreplaceable source for the early history of French Protestantism.⁹ The Catholic account was meant to commemorate the Parlement's role in the riot in a book commissioned by one of its attorneys, Georges Bosquet, titled *Histoire sur les troubles advenus en la ville de Toulouse l'an 1562*.¹⁰ Finally, the trial records of the witch hunt in Seix in the diocese of Couserans and the subsequent appeal of the sentences to the Parlement of Toulouse allows us to shed light on the first of such known instances in sixteenth-century France.¹¹ Unfortunately, the trial records are incomplete and only provide a partial account of the events surrounding the accusations and judicial prosecutions. However, they provide enough details to draw a few conclusions on the nature of the accusations and the attitudes of the judges towards witchcraft.

The outbreak of war in 1562 presented problems to French Parlements. After the Royal Edict of January granting Protestants the right to practice their faith, the Parlements could no longer punish or condemn the Huguenots as heretics.¹² However, they could still sentence them as rebels and they could still use capital punishment in

⁹ Théodore de Bèze, *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France*, G. Baum and E. Cunitz (eds.), 3 vols. (Paris, 1883-9).

¹⁰ Georges Bosquet, *Histoire sur les troubles advenus en la ville de Toulouse l'an 1562*, reproduced in Frederic Leblanc du Vernet (ed.), *Recueil de pièces historiques aux guerres de religion de Toulouse*, 2nd edition (Paris: A. Abadie, 1862), pp. 13-133.

¹¹ A.C.S. (Archives communales de Seix, déposées aux Archives départementales de l'Ariège) containing the *Actes de procédure*: Affaire Marthe de Ga, Ysabe Tailleu et Philippe du Rieu. (ACS, ff, 2/18-2/33); Reprinted as an appendix in Jean-François le Nail, "Procédure contre des sorcières de Seix en 1562" in *Bulletin de la société ariégeoise des sciences, lettres et arts*, vol. 31, (1976), pp. 155-232, appendix: pp. 195-232.

¹² The text of the Edict of Saint-Germain-en-Lay of January 1562 was prepared by the mother of the young king, Catherine de Médicis, regent of the kingdom, assisted by the chancellor Michel de L'Hopital. After the period of repression during the reign of Henri II, it marked a reversal in royal policies concerning the Reformed religion. The text represented a sign of a tolerant attitude on the part of the king, but limited and provisory. In the text, the king allowed Protestants to practice their cult outside of fortified cities, and to hold assemblies in private houses inside those same cities. In exchange, Protestants had to return the places of worship they had captured. The creation of consistories and the meetings of synods were authorised. Pastors were now recognized, but they had to swear fealty to the local authorities. See Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 47.

cases of iconoclasm. Across the kingdom of France, the structure of the first Huguenot revolts consisted of an unstable alliance between several Protestant nobles loyal to the prince de Condé and a cluster of urban revolts affecting several important French cities: Toulouse, Rouen and Bordeaux were directly affected by attempted Huguenots coups in 1562.¹³

Toulouse was a huge city with a population of over 40,000 inhabitants. Its political independence had a long history dating back to its charters in the thirteenth century.¹⁴ Its privileges included the exemption from royal taxes and of having a royal garrison within its walls. The eight city consuls (*capitouls*) were elected annually for the eight *capitoulats* of the city. The *capitouls* did not originate from any exclusive group, faction or social sphere, and their number included noblemen, lawyers and merchants.¹⁵ In direct opposition to the municipality was the Parlement. The Parlement's size and involvement in city affairs had grown considerably in the previous decades. The majority of *capitouls* elected in 1562 were said to be Protestants, or at least sympathetic to them.¹⁶ By 1561, politics, education, government and defence were all matters of dispute between the two authorities.

6.2 – Preaching against Protestant Traitors

The first act of tragedy was a kind of prelude to the revolt. On the Thursday after Easter, April 2, 1562, during the feast day of St. Salvador and also the funeral of the

¹³ W. Monter, *Judging the French Reformation*, p. 220.

¹⁴ Pierre Chaunu and Robert Gascon give 40,000 by 1550, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1977), vol.1, partie 1, p. 397. For Toulouse's Charters, see J.H. Mundy, *Liberty and Political Power in Toulouse, 1050-1230*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), pp. 93-95 and p. 249.

¹⁵ Mark Greengrass, "The Anatomy of a Religious Riot in Toulouse in May 1562", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 34, no. 3 (July 1983), p. 368.

¹⁶ Davis, "Persecution and Protestantism", p.33.

wife of a Protestant merchant, Catholic priests tried to snatch the body of the deceased in order to give it a Catholic burial and in the process instigated a street fight with the mourners. A number of Protestants died and the riot continued into the following day.¹⁷ Pierre-Jean Souriac argues that the climate of confrontation progressively increased as militants and partisans chose their camps. The chronology underlines a gradual trend towards a logic of confrontation, amplified by the manifestations of violence, individual altercations, and riots, all preludes to the French Wars of Religion.¹⁸

The municipal councilmen decided to rally to the prince de Condé, who was assembling a Huguenot army at Orléans. They secretly dispatched one of their number to obtain military support from him. Tension between the civil authorities continued growing and paranoia was rampant: the Huguenots had been smuggling arms into the city for months and the Parlement hastened to ask for military assistance from nearby Catholic noblemen and started to garrison major places in the city.¹⁹ With this news, an immediate Huguenot coup was decided upon on May 12, 1562. With the promise of additional troops and thinking that they had the element of surprise on their side, the city consuls led the Huguenot uprising. That evening, the Protestant militia was let into the city through the Porte Villeneuve and these forces took the town hall. They then secured the three university colleges and erected several barricades across key streets. Open street fighting began early the following day on May 13. The *Histoire ecclésiastique*

¹⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Rites of Violence" in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), p. 171.

¹⁸ Jean-Pierre Souriac, "Du corps à corps au combat fictif: quand les Catholiques toulousains affrontaient leurs homologues Protestants", in Frédérique Pitou and Jacqueline Sainclivier (eds.), *Les affrontements: usages, discours et rituels* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), pp. 23-43.

¹⁹ Mark Greengrass, "The Anatomy of a Religious Riot", p. 376.

speaks of 7,000 to 8,000 fighting on the Catholic side alone. The Huguenot insurrection lasted five days, from May 13 to 17.

However, before any assistance could reach Toulouse, the Parlement had become aware of the plot and the court acted immediately.²⁰ The riot was suppressed only after five days of bloody street fighting. With counter-insurgency measures already in place, the Parlement had immediately taken the initiative and led the counterattack against the insurgent municipal officials. They succeeded in defeating their opponents even before a Catholic relief force reached the capital of Languedoc. As William Monter points out, at no other time in French history did an appellate court take direct responsibility for the military as well as the political aspects of counterinsurgency. This unique achievement enabled royal institutions to retain some authority across the Languedoc, given Huguenot successes in other major cities such as Nimes, Montpellier and Montauban.²¹ About 200 Huguenots died in the street fighting alone. The reasons for the Protestant failure are not difficult to discern. They were outnumbered and outgunned. They had lost the element of surprise and the promise of troops by the Huguenot nobility never materialized.²² More significantly, the idea that French Calvinists were traitors and instigators of public disorder was proven true for the judges of the Parlement the day that the Huguenots tried to take the city in a coup.

This view was not limited to the *parlementaires* and the political leadership. Popular religious conservatism was repeatedly demonstrated in a firm and committed opposition to the Reformed religion. Townspeople generally opposed royal edicts which held forth

²⁰ See E. Connac, "Troubles de mai 1562", *Annales du Midi*, III (1891), p. 311 and Greengrass, "The anatomy of a religious riot", p. 376.

²¹ Monter, *Judging the French Reformation*, p. 221.

²² Greengrass, "The anatomy of a religious riot", p. 388.

the promise of toleration for Protestants. This popular attitude was reflected in the sermons of Catholic preachers in Toulouse prior to the riots. In 1561, the *capitouls* were particularly alarmed at the tone and impact of the notorious Franciscan preacher Melchior de Flavin, a man who exercised both the office of royal preacher for Henri II and the guardianship of the prestigious Observant convent at Toulouse.²³ He and two other preachers were arrested for seditious remarks against the queen mother and her apparent softness towards the Huguenots.²⁴ In the Catholic account of the riot, Flavin was described by Bosquet as “ heaven's trumpet (...) who penetrated the interior of our souls [with] the most moving [sentiments] capable of stirring the human affections to divine love and to melt the hearts of steel”.²⁵ He was essentially described as an effective opponent of Calvinism, while the tone of his sermons was apt to inflame Protestants. In 1551, a Lenten sermon given in the city of Albi became a life-and-death matter for the preacher. A riot broke out during the sermon and in his *Histoire ecclésiastique*, Beza suggests that only the timely intervention of the magistrates saved the preacher's life.²⁶ Flavin is mentioned several times in the *Histoire ecclésiastique*. In one particular instance, Beza depicts Flavin along with other preachers accusing the government from the pulpit in Toulouse of not pursuing heretics aggressively enough.

²³ Greengrass, “The Anatomy of a Religious Riot”, p. 381 and Megan Armstrong, *Politics of Piety, Franciscan Preachers During the Wars of Religion, 1560-1600* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2004), p. 25.

²⁴ T. Beza, *Histoire Ecclesiastique*, p. 442.

²⁵ “ (...) une trompette du ciel, encore mieux disant par ses écrits et plus célèbre qu'auparavant au silence des muses et voix muettes, pénétrant l'intérieur de nos âmes; des plus pathétiques et aptes à émouvoir les humaines affections à l'amour divin et amollir les cœurs d'acier.” G. Bosquet, *Histoire sur les troubles advenus en la ville de Toulouse l'an 1562*, p. 36.

²⁶ “Un peu auparavant étoient advenus deux grands scandales : le premier fut en carême au temple appelé la Dalbade, prêchant, Melchior, au prêche duquel étant quelqu'un des assistant repris par un autre se trouvant près de luy, de ce qu'il lisoit en un livre de pseume au lieu d'écouter le precheur, le peuple s'ésmeut telment, que les capitouls y survenans eurent bien à faire à luy sauver la vie.” T. de Bèze, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, p. 442.

These friars “cried with full vigour against the magistrates, sparing not even the king or his council, encouraging the people to all disobediences.”²⁷

In his *Remontrance de la vraye religion au Roy très chrétien Charles IX*, published in 1562, Flavin ran a single argument which irrevocably binds up religious truth with political behaviour. The argument rested on the conviction that heresy threatened not just individual salvation but the whole social order. God will punish those who deviate from His teachings or allow deviation to take place, and His punishment will be collective as well as individual. Invoking the evil of the times as a sign of God’s punishment for sin, Flavin argued that to be restored to God’s grace it was necessary to cast out the diabolical poison of heresy: “They do everything to close the road to salvation. Because thus the devil, principal author of heresy, is closed off and banished from the glory, he also desires, and attempts to deprive us of faith and salvation”.²⁸ The sovereign was responsible to see that this was accomplished. There was nothing original about this argument, which appeared in countless anti-Huguenot polemics and was almost certainly preached from a great many Catholic pulpits during the same period.²⁹ As discussed in chapter 1, the association of heresy and the devil had been rhetorical trope established in mendicant sermons even before the fifteenth century by Dominican and Franciscan preachers. Flavin was an Observant Franciscan preacher who continued

²⁷ “D’autre part, certains prêcheurs plus séditeux, avec une audace incroyable, crioient à gorge déployée contre les magistrats, iusques à n’épargner le roy ni son conseil, incitans le peuple à toute désobéissance & rébellion.” Cited in *Histoire Écclésiastique*, p. 442.

²⁸ “Et le tout font pour nous clorre le chemin de salut. Car tout ainsi que le Diable, auteur principal de l’heresie, est forclos & banny de la gloire, aussi désire-t-il, & s’efforce de nous priver avec foy, de salut”. See Melchior de Flavin, *Remontrance de la vraye religion au Roy très chrétien Charles IX*, (Paris, 1562), p. 25.

²⁹ Barbara B. Diefendorf, “Simon Vigor: A Radical Preacher in Sixteenth Century Paris”, *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, vol. 18, no.3 (1987), p. 402.

the tradition of attacking heretics by associating them with the devil in the sixteenth century. Like other preachers at the time, Flavin referenced historical instances when the toleration of heresy had literally brought about the downfall of the kingdom.³⁰ By nature, heretics were seditious and disturbers of public peace. If the regent Catherine de Medici continued her policy of toleration, this inevitably would cause the ruin of France: “This is not to be tolerated for long, because heresy cannot remain without the ruin of the kingdom because your kingdom cannot exist without religion, but religion can exist without the kingdom.”³¹

Maintaining religious and political peace is what governed the attitude of the judges of the Parlement. Raymond Mentzer argues that the magistrates of Toulouse were not religious fanatics and that they only earned that reputation in contemporary Protestant propaganda.³² On the persecution of Protestants which followed the riot, the martyrologist Jean Crespin wrote that “nothing was overlooked by the court of the Parlement or the clergy in order that everything be exterminated”.³³ This is true, as the Parlement distinguished itself through the stern application of anti-heresy laws and the relentless persecution of Protestants. But for Mentzer, this was the logical outcome of the judicial concept of heresy. It was not simply a matter of religious error, because heresy also involved rebellion against the king. The elements of public order and social

³⁰ “Puis donc que votre douceur n’a eu envers les séditieux & perturbateurs du repos public efficace, ainsi se sont redu plus endurcis, & ont fait pire que devant abusant de votre longanimité, & miséricorde, prenez les armes, & rigoureusement les châtier”. Melchior de Flavin, *Remontrance*, p. 27.

³¹ Flavin, *Remontrance*, p. 28: “Cecy n’est à toléré longtems, car il ne peut demeurer sans la ruine d’iceluy, car sans la Religion, ne peut être votre royaume, mais la Religion peut être sans iceluy”.

³² Raymond Mentzer, “Calvinist Propaganda and the Parlement of Toulouse”, *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte / Archive or Reformation History*, vol. 68 (1977), pp. 268-282.

³³ Jean Crespin, *Histoire des martyrs persécutez et mis à mort pour vérité de l’Évangile*, D.Benoît (ed.), 3 vols (Paris: Société des livres religieux, 1884-1887), vol. III, p. 350.

harmony were crucial. As Protestantism gained strength in Languedoc, the Parlement increasingly associated the movement with public disturbances and turmoil, illicit assemblies and conventicles, illegal carrying of weapons and factionalism, conspiracy and rebellion.³⁴

From the end of the rioting until royal amnesty reached Toulouse at the end of September, the Parlement identified a total of 1,128 suspected *séditieux* residing in Toulouse.³⁵ William Monter has characterized the subsequent persecution by the Parlement as “the most thorough religious purge ever performed by a sixteenth-century French appellate court”.³⁶ The Parlement used public *monitoires* from local Protestant clergy and house-to-house searches to identify the suspects. More than 100 of the total suspects were executed by the Parlement and its subordinate tribunals.³⁷ Monter’s assessment appears to be accurate given that in the previous forty years combined, this Parlement had investigated just over 1,000 suspected heretics and publicly executed about sixty of them.³⁸

The Toulouse executions of 1562 included a handful of victims who do not fit the category of armed rebels. It seems more than coincidence that this Parlement upheld three death sentences for witchcraft against Catholic women during the same months that it ordered women executed for Protestant sedition.³⁹ The first known witch trials for this period took place in the diocese of Couserans, whose bishop had just raised a militia

³⁴ Mentzer, “Calvinist Propaganda”, p. 281.

³⁵ Mentzer, “Calvinist Propaganda”, p. 280.

³⁶ Monter, *Judging the French Reformation*, p. 221.

³⁷ Joan Davies, “Persecution and Protestantism”, p.34.

³⁸ Raymond Mentzer, *Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, 1500-1560* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1984), p. 122.

³⁹ Le Nail “Procédure contre des sorcières de Seix en 1562”, p. 160.

among his solidly Catholic flock to aid the besieged Catholics of Toulouse during the uprising. In the space of less than one year, forty women from Seix, Massat, Soulan and Taurignan, in the mountain region outside Toulouse, were charged with the crime of witchcraft. During the period starting with the arrest of Marthe de Ga in March 1562 and ending in February 1563, thirty-nine other women were condemned to death for witchcraft by the “tribuneaux ordinaires”. The chronology points to the cases of Seix as the starting point of a general investigation for witchcraft in all of Couserans. They are the first known cases, and the “arrets criminels” of the Parlement make no mention of any cases of witchcraft before March 1562. After that they become abundant.⁴⁰

6.3 – The Witch-Hunt of Couserans

It all started a few days prior to March 19 in Seix, when the seventy year old widow Marthe de Ga was arrested for witchcraft on the denunciation of her two sons. She immediately confessed and was executed April 28. During her interrogation, she implicated her daughter and one of her neighbours. Two months later on June 1, an investigation was opened against Arnaude du Barrau, age forty-five. The witnesses accused her of a variety of crimes all indicating that she was a witch. She was arrested not long after she fled the village when she was found in Saint-Girons.

The witch trials in Seix reflect the popular association of unexplained misfortunes with the practice of harmful magic. While the diabolical aspect was not necessarily invoked, it always seemed implied. Marthe and Arnaude were accused of using fire,

⁴⁰ A.C.S. (Archives communales de Seix, déposées aux Archives départementales de l’Ariège) containing the *Actes de procédure* : Affaire Marthe de Ga, Ysabe Tailieu et Philippe du Rieu. (ACS, ff, 2/18-2/33), in *Le Nail* “ Procédure contre des sorcières de Seix en 1562”, pp, 191-194.

suffocation, poison, the evil touch and curses. The type of *maleficia* depended on the age of the person. Babies were exposed to fire and placed back in their cribs; others were simply suffocated in their beds. One baby seemed to be affected by the evil touch. A baby was left alone with Arnaude when he started crying, and never stopped until he died two or three days later. For the adults, six were poisoned; one was afflicted by the evil touch and another by a curse.

Exposure to fire and suffocation were used in combination on babies and young children. Suffocation was not caused by strangulation. Marthe de Ga said that she would break the ribs (*romper les costes*) of young children before they died a few days or a few weeks later. Exposing children to fire before suffocating them gives the impression of a demonic ritual. Along with suffocation, poison was the preferred weapon of the rural witch. Ten adults and children were alleged victims of poison by Marthe and Arnaude. The Gascon word “*posoè*” signified both “poison” and “poisoner” and the word was generally a synonym for “sorcerer”. It is in this sense that we must understand the connotation of the only terms used in the 1562 procedures to refer to the accused: “*poisonière*” or “*métier de poisonière*”.⁴¹ A suspicious white powder was found on both Marthe and Arnaude. Marthe confessed to owning a toad, an animal traditionally associated with the devil, and that she used its urine as the principal ingredient of her poison, but she was unable to produce the toad because she had thrown it into the river.

⁴¹ On the use of poison in cases of witchcraft, Étienne Delacambre wrote that “At the end of the Middle Ages, demonic poison tended, in general popular beliefs, to replace bewitchment and the other imitating rituals that witches used to supposedly cause illness and death”; “A la fin du Moyen âge, le poison infernal tendit, dans l’ensemble des croyances populaires, à supplanter l’envoutement et les autres rites imitateurs à l’aide desquels la sorcière était censée provoquer la maladie ou la mort”, cited in *Le concept de sorcellerie dans le duché de Lorraine au XVI^e et au XVII^e siècles*, tome 2 (Nancy: Société d’archéologie Lorraine, 1948-1951), p. 95.

Aurnaude denied ever owning a toad despite the testimony of a neighbour who heard croaking noises emanating from her house.⁴² However, she was overheard at the mill discussing herbs that were known to counteract poison. Arnaude was also accused of touching a woman on the shoulder before her arm went completely limp and became unusable. She later healed the woman's arm herself, validating the belief that witches could reverse their curses.⁴³ Arnaude was finally accused of cursing and threatening a young girl through gestures, making it physically impossible for the young girl to walk past the place where Arnaude had threatened her.

The crimes attributed to the witches of Seix were all part of the stereotypes of early modern witchcraft, which we can define as simple sorcery. One striking detail was that poison was more frequently used than any other method. It is impossible to know if these women were truly guilty of these crimes. However, there is no doubt that these misfortunes had long been attributed to the work of witches. These reputed witches were tolerated by the community for a long time, but only up to a certain point. The initial

⁴² Early Modern witchcraft in England was characterized by the common belief in 'familiars', animals that helped witches perform curses and was a point of contact between witches and the demons they worshiped. See James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 62.

⁴³ *1^{er} juin – 15 juillet 1562 – Seix, Saint-Girons, Montjoie. Enquête secrète ouverte contre Arnaude: déposition de seize témoins à charge. Testimony of Jehanne Barbes* : Archives communales de Seix, déposé aux archives départementales de l'Ariège, ff 2/34 XI: "... and the day that the said witness found said De Barrau on the road to the right of the said Cap of Loys, in passing, said de Barrau touched said witness with an arm to the muscle and arm (*esquar?*): and incontinence came to the witness a great coldness to the said arm which the arm remained greatly angry and could not well be helped. And when came the Thursday after Easter and the evening, at half night was found the witness angry from the said arm, without being able to help it, and since a long time the witness could not be helped or do anything with her said arm; ... et le jour que lad. Déposante treuva lad. De Barrau au chemyn et droict dudict Cap de Loys, en passant, lad. de Barrau toucha lad. déposante avec ung bras au muscle et bras *esquar* : et incontinant vint à la déposante une grande froideur par ledict bras duquel bras demeura grandement fachée et ne pouvoyt bonnement ayder. Et quant se vint le jedy apres Pasques et le soyr, sur la demyenuict se treuva la déposante fachée dudit bras, sans s'en pouvoyr ayder et depuis de long temps la déposante ne s'est peu ayder ny fere aulcune chose de sondict bras." Printed in J.F. Le Nail, "Procédures", pp. 219-220.

cause of the formal accusations in the cases of Seix is not clear. There were no hailstorms or bad weather that destroyed crops, and no bad harvests. There was an isolated outbreak of the plague in Amoullins, a nearby town, which did not stop Arnaude from passing through there when she attempted to escape prosecution.⁴⁴ In 1562, Couserans was still sheltered from the religious turmoil of the Reformation.⁴⁵ The nearby Episcopal city of Saint-Lizier and the city of Comminges had been in a state of religious turmoil since 1555, but the mountain region had remained firmly in the hands of Catholics. The most likely explanation is that the Protestant uprisings in adjacent territories had created an atmosphere of panic by exacerbating existing social tensions and provoked the people to turn against witches. The prosecutions of witches were meant to establish a godly peace. Getting rid of witches restored the religious integrity of the community and protected it from future danger. Without any Huguenots to target directly, the people in the diocese of Couserans could eliminate witches suspected of causing harm, a parallel to cleansing Huguenot heretics from nearby communities. Consciously decided or not, the prosecutions were an act of public cleansing and this task naturally fell to the judicial authorities.

⁴⁴ A.C.S, ff. 2/34 in Le Nail "Procédudres", pp. 207-208: "(...) de la Serre became ill from what she ate, the witness saw that she could not speak after said de Barrau powdered said *mygrane*; and after said La Serre ate this de Barrau was said and put to blame by the whole city and neighbours of said La Serre testify that said La Serre went to Amoullins that was suffering from the plague (...) Asked if it was certain science that said Barrau had become fugitive and absent from the present city of Seix and her husband (...) and had since remained fugitive as much in the city of Saint Giron, Ledare, Amoullins and other locations (...) that she was found renting a room from the witness (...)."

⁴⁵ This date marked the beginning of religious hostilities when at Christmas, the *religionnaires* (Protestants) of Foix tried to take the Episcopal city of Saint-Lizier, while the neighbouring city of Comminges had been in a state of religious turmoil since 1555. See Jean Lestrade (abbé.), *Les Huguenots en Comminges (nouvelle série): documents inédits publiés pour la Société historique de Gascogne, Volume 1* (Société historique de Gascogne: H. Champion, 1910), p.32.

The “Arrêts criminels” of the Parlement show that the trials in Seix and the rest of Couserans in 1562 and 1563 were all adjudicated by lay judges and city magistrates. Another striking detail is that these trials are characterised by their lack of insistence on explicit demonological elements and they focused on harmful magic. The demonic pact was invoked in the case of Marthe de Ga. Under torture, Marthe was forced to say “that she had confessed that she gave herself to the devil, in body and soul, renounced God the creator, the glorious Virgin Mary, his mother, and all of the celestial court of Paradise and took the devil for her master”.⁴⁶ There was no mention of the witches’ sabbath, the night gatherings where witches worship the devil. It would thus be an error, here, to impose an explanation based on the learned culture of stubborn judges, as it has been done for other regions affected by witch trials (Labourd, Lorraine and Franche-Comté)⁴⁷. The ordinary judges of Seix had probably not read the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which had not been reedited since 1520.⁴⁸ However, demonological notions did play a role in some cases, such as Marthe de Ga, who was forced to confess under torture that she worshipped the devil. It must however be noted that almost all jurists and

⁴⁶ A.C.S. ff 2/26, April 28, 1562, Le Nail, procédure contre des sorcières de Seix”, p. 204: “Collection of answers made by Marthe de Ga to previous interrogations, destined to be re-read on the scaffold”/“Récollement des réponses faites par Marthe de Ga aux interrogatoires précédents, destiné à être relu sur l’échafaud”: “Et apres a confessé soy estre donnée au diable, son corps et ame, renucé Dieu le créateur, la glorieuse Vierge Marye, sa mère et toutte la court celestiale de Paradis et point le diable pour son maistre”.

⁴⁷ For the role of Pierre de Lancre’s *Tableau de l’inconstence des mauvais anges et démons* (1612) in Labourd, see P.-G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Witch Hunters: Professional Prickers, Unwitchers & Witch Finders of the Renaissance*. Stroud, (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2003), pp. 47-48. For the impact of Nicholas Rémy’s *Démonolatrie* (1592) in Lorraine, see Robin Briggs, *Witches of Lorraine*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); C.H. Pfster, “Nicolas Rémy et la sorcellerie en Lorraine à la fin du XVI^e siècle”, in Brian Levack (ed.), *The Literature of Witchcraft* vol. 4 (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 105-134. For Franche Comté’s first major witch hunts orchestrated by the demonologist Henri Boguet, see W. Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: The Borderlands During the Reformation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976) and Brigitte Rochelandet, *Sorcières, diables et bûchers en Franche-Comté au XVI^e et XVII^e siècles* (Besançon: Cêtre, 1997).

⁴⁸ Waite, *Eradicating*, p. 65.

theologians agreed that magic was inherently demonic and that the practice of harmful magic implied a demonic pact. The judges of Seix showed that they were aware that witchcraft was the devil's territory. Under torture, Marthe de Ga confessed to giving herself to the devil. These trial records show that the judges paid close attention to the details of the crime, which were repeatedly mentioned and insisted upon during the interrogations: the physical evidence in the form of powder, when was poison used, the relationship of the victim to the accused, where the accused was located when the crime was committed, with whom were the children when they became ill, who else was present, and what the witnesses saw and heard. The mindset of the "juges ordinaires" of Courserans does not seem overtly obsessed with the existence of an underground demonic conspiracy, as has been shown in other witch hunts in early modern Europe.⁴⁹ Despite probable differences in their social status, consuls and judges shared the same attitudes and mentalities towards the popular culture. It was not a high-minded learned judge, assigned by a higher civic or religious authority, who presided over the cases of poor ignorant and naïve women, but a whole population who would deliver these apparent evil doers to their own elected magistrate in order to be eliminated. For example, the judges were confident that divine judgement would prevail by administering the trial of blood to Arnaude, a process in which the accused would be brought before the victim's body, and if it bled, then guilt was determined. After the

⁴⁹ William Monter showed that the writings of Peter Binsfeld and Friederich Förner had direct impacts on the 'superhunts' in Triers and Franconia which they helped to coordinate. See *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland: the Borderlands during the Reformation* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 109. Stuart Clark wrote that "there has even been an assumption among modern historians that demonology was one of the principal causes of witchcraft prosecutions", cited in "Demonology", in Bengt Ankarloo, Stuart Clark (eds.), *The Period of the Witch Trials, vol. 4 of The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 136.

death of Gabrielle de la Serre, the judges “had such opinion to make all the women neighbours of the said de la Serre pass over her body so that as passing that God show some miracle and knowledge”.⁵⁰ It was to avoid this test that Arnaude had fled the village and thus betrayed her guilty conscience.⁵¹

Of the forty cases of witchcraft, thirty-nine were appealed to the Parlement, because Marthe de Ga had been executed promptly after her confession. The appeal of sentences rendered by ordinary judges to the king’s justice became generalized in sixteenth-century France: capital and other corporal punishments were automatically appealed to the Parlements. While the judges of the Parlement only upheld three sentences for capital punishment, scepticism concerning the reality of witchcraft was not a factor. They were more concerned with the correct application of procedure and that a sufficient burden of proof had been met.⁵² For example, they ordered that all the women who had been found guilty or who were now on trial for witchcraft be assigned a

⁵⁰ 1^{er} septembre 1562 – Seix – Audition d’Arnaude mise à la question (minute informé). Archives communales de Seix, déposé aux archives départementales de l’Ariège, FF 2/45, from the testimony of Jehannotet Ciergant, *marchant, habitant de lad. Ville eagé de 84 and ou environ, témoigne moyenant jurgement, interrogé*: “eurent tel avys de faire passer toutes les femmes voisines de lad de la Serre par-dessus son corps pour et affin que en passant que Dieu y montresse quelque miracle et congnyssance”. Printed in J.F Le Nail, “Procédures”, p. 208. The belief in divine intervention in the designation of the guilty party was still being used in the middle of the seventeenth century, despite the disparagement of its use by Church officials. These tests derived from the early medieval trial by ordeal, such as the consecrated water trial in which the water would reject the body of the witch. See Brian A. Pavlac, *Witch Hunts in the Western World: Persecution and Punishment from the Inquisition Through the Salem Trials*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), p. 205; Robert Mandrou gives an example of the use of the ordeal at Aix in April 1652, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVII^e siècle: une analyse de psychologie historique*, (Paris: Plon, 1968), pp. 102-103 and 386. See also John W. Baldwin, “The crisis of the ordeal: literature, law and religion around 1200”, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (winter 1994), pp. 327-353.

⁵¹ 1562, 1^{er} juin – 15 juillet. Seix, Saint-Girons, Montjoie. *Enquête secrète ouverte contre Arnaude: dépositions de seize témoins à Charge*. ACS, FF, 2/34. Printed in J.F Le Nail, “Procédures”, p. 208.

⁵² Alfred Soman has observed the same trend for the cases of witchcraft judged on appeal by the Parlement of Paris: “The chief problem for the high court was not so much the reality of the crime of witchcraft as it was the maintenance of public order and the imposition of high standards of criminal justice upon a lower magistracy far from easy to control.” Cited in “The Parlement of Paris and the Great Witch-Hunt”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2 (July 1978), p. 44.

competent lawyer to defend them.⁵³ After Arnaude persisted in denying her guilt, they approved that she be tortured and finally approved her execution after she confirmed many of the circumstantial details established in the testimony of her neighbours.

Finally, just as lay justice took responsibility for the persecution of heretics, it was also the only judicial authority which entertained accusations of witchcraft. It was even the *parlementaires* who paradoxically lectured the religious authorities. Many of the “arrêts” of the “Chambre criminelle” rendered against the witches of Couserans ended on these words: “and has ordered and orders the said court of the bishop of Couserans and his vicar to provide in his diocese competent and sufficient preachers not suspected in the faith or Christian religion to preach and instruct the people within his diocese under pain of 10,000 pounds and other penalties.”⁵⁴ In other words, the existence of witches revealed that at least some of the people of Couserans were not properly Christianized and that these religious deviants were threatening to bring down social order from within by means of witchcraft. In 1390, the Parlement of Paris had asserted its own jurisdiction over crimes involving witchcraft and in 1398 the University of Paris

⁵³ A.C.S. ff 2/43, August 25, 1562, Toulouse, in Le Nail, “Procédures contres des sorcières de Seix”, p. 224: “Jurist consults of Toulouse on the trial of Arnaude” - “(...) the women, those who are prisoners and those accused in front of them, to provide them, with lawyers sufficient and capable of conducting the defense for them; fairont pourvoir ausd. Femmes, tant celles quy sont prinsoyere que autres que seront prevenus pardevant eulx, de avocat suffisant et capable pour leur conduite et deffence aux despens d’elles”.

⁵⁴ ADHG, B, (Archives départementales de la Haute-Garonne), Parlement de Toulouse, Arrêts criminels, reg 85, Le Nail, “Procédure contre des sorcières de Seix”, p. 230. Order from the parlement to the bishop after adjudicating the appeal “et a enjoint et enjoint lad. Cour de l’évêque de Couserans et son vicaire de pourveoir en son diocese de prêcheurs compétants et souffisans ny suspectz de la foy et religion chrestienne pour prescher et instruire les personnes estant en sond. Diocese a peyne de dix mil livres et autre arbitraire”. *Vendredi XVIII^e de septembre mil V C LXII, en la Chambre criminelle presens Messieurs Latomy, president Reynier,, du Solier, Hebrard, Coignard de fores, Sabatier, Catel, Garaga, Barram, Rudelle, du Lac*. The heading of the ruling reads “Veu le process fait par les consulz de la vallée de Massat ou leur assesseur a Bortholone de Servat, dicte de martin, Mary de Sablé et Peyronne Teyssenere, dicte la Rouge, prisonnières en la Consiègrie, apelans desd. Consulz ou leurd. Assesseur, et elle ouyes en leur cause d’appel”.

had condemned the practice of witchcraft as a form of heresy, making crimes involving religious deviance subject to secular justices.⁵⁵ Another element that reveals the link between heresy and witchcraft in the minds of the *parlementaires* was the manner in which they were executed. As was the custom in the executions of heretics, the three witches of Couserans were to be handed over to the executioner and to be brought on a cart with a noose around the neck to the public place of the town. There, they would be hanged and strangled before their bodies would be burned.⁵⁶

While this study has shown that preaching was responsible in part for the development of the heretical witch stereotype, the judges of the Parlement believed that preaching was the solution to the crisis. The association of religious deviance and heresy with seditious behaviour thus also extended to witchcraft. The witch's behaviour was also subversive to political stability. Infanticides, illnesses, and curses, all typical crimes associated with witchcraft, damaged the fabric of society. It was through the combination of popular beliefs, the judicial conception of heresy and the demonizing rhetoric contained in anti-Huguenot polemics that the sixteenth-century French witch became an enemy of the state.

6.4 – The Possession of Nicole Obry in 1566

Cases of demonic possession became rhetorical tools used by some within the Catholic Church in Reformation France against the heretical Huguenots. In 1566, Nicole Obry's demonic possession, from the Catholic point of view, took the form of a ritualized combat between Satan and the Holy Spirit. The sensational public exorcisms

⁵⁵ Brian P. Levack, "The University of Paris: a condemnation of magic", in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 47.

⁵⁶ ADHG, B, Parlement de Toulouse, Arrêts criminels, reg 85 printed in Le Nail, "Procédures contre des sorcières de Seix", p. 183.

held at the cathedral of Laon were performed in front of large crowds to demonstrate the diabolical nature of Calvinism and the event was ultimately used to show that the demon that possessed Nicole professed the same doctrines held by the Huguenots. This analysis will be centred on the utterances made by the demon to show how they constitute a kind of live Catholic sermon and how they validated Catholic religious truth. Furthermore, the public nature of the exorcism, the subsequent framing of the account in Catholics narratives as a miracle and the alleged conversions of a great number of Protestants will help to demonstrate how this infamous case of possession in sixteenth-century France essentially represented a live *exempla*. This live performance of a miracle made it more effective than any traditional sermon.

This analysis will draw out the theatrical elements of preaching in order to support the overall argument that Nicole Obry's public exorcism ultimately functioned as a live representation of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. The expulsion of the demon validated religious truth and in the same blow condemned and exposed the Huguenots as heretics and thus enemies of the state. This assertion relies on the well-established premise that Obry's case became a powerful contemporary narrative that served the purposes of Catholic propaganda after the event.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ See Brian P. Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 86-87; Jonathan L. Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes: Demonology and Politics in France, 1560-1620* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999); Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France*, (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 36-39; Denis Crouzet, "A Woman and the Devil: Possession and Exorcism in Sixteenth Century France", in Michael Wolfe (ed.), *Changing Identities in Early Modern France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 191-215.

Jean Boulaese was one of the Catholic chroniclers who framed the story of Obry's possession as a confessional attack against Protestants.⁵⁸ On 3 November 1565, Nicole Obry, a young woman of sixteen, recently married to Louis Pierret (tailor), legitimate daughter of Pierre Obry (butcher) and of Catherine Vuillot, was praying in the church of her village, Vervin (Picartie), in the diocese of Laon. She was kneeling over the tomb of her maternal grandfather, Joachim Vuillot, who had died suddenly without having received last rites. A shrouded man appeared before her, declared himself to be her grandfather, and entered her body which made her so violently ill that it was necessary to give her last rites in case she died.⁵⁹ During her illness, her supposed grandfather continued to address her, demanding that masses be given, that his heirs complete his unfinished good works and pilgrimages so that his soul could rest in peace. Nicole's family did everything to satisfy these demands, but the spirit continued his torment, making Nicole "hard and rigid, making her hands so tight they could not be opened without the words of the priest in the name of God commanding this spirit to let them open, which he did".⁶⁰

An examination was performed by priests and all suspicions of a ruse on the part of Nicole were dismissed. On Monday, November 26, the Dominican friar Pierre de la Motte answered a request sent by Robert de Coucy, co-seigneur of Vervin, archdeacon

⁵⁸ Jean Boulaese was probably a pseudonym used by the Catholic polemicist Guillaume Postel (1510-1581), a very unconventional Catholic who was himself suspected of heterodoxy. There are no records for Jean Boulaese's birthplace or references to life events. See M.L. Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel: Prophet of the Restitution of All Things His Life and Thought* (The Hague: Springer, 1981), p. 51.

⁵⁹ Jean Boulaese, *Le manuel de l'admirable victoire du corps de Dieu sur l'esprit maling Beelzebub obtenue à Laon 1566* (Liège: H. Houins, 1598).

⁶⁰ "dure et froide, les mains serrees tant estroitement qu'on ne les peult ouvrir sinon par les paroles du prebtre au nom de dieu commandant à cest esprit les laisser ouvrir, ce qu'il fait". Boulaese, *Le thresor et entiere histoire de la triomphante victoire du corps de Dieu sur l'esprit maling Beelzebub, obtenue à Laon l'an mil cinq cens soixante six, receuillie des oeuvres et Actes publics cy apres specifies et de mot à mot entierement couchez...*

of Laon, and abbot of Foigny to the cathedral of Laon. The next day la Motte began performing conjurations in the Obry house.⁶¹ As a trained Dominican, La Motte would have an extensive background in preaching. La Motte forced the spirit to admit that his name was not Joachim Vuillot, Nicole's grandfather, and that he was in fact a demon named 'Beelzebub'.⁶² Based on this new information, Nicole was officially declared to be possessed by a demon. Nicole's body continued to endure violent torment, especially the way her face became horribly contorted when la Motte splashed it with holy water. This convinced the religious authorities that Nicole was authentically possessed by a demon.

Sarah Ferber underlines the importance of la Motte's intervention and probative rituals as an ordained priest in diagnosing the demonic and thus spiritual nature of Nicole's affliction, allowing it to be officially recognized by Church officials.⁶³ Pierre de la Motte brought Nicole to the church of Vervins where he continued the exorcism. By this point, Nicole had become too strong for her husband and two other men to control. To stop Nicole from confessing and from receiving the Host at the church, the demon made her deaf, mute and blind. The demon threw Nicole's body in the snow several times in front of many witnesses but would then calm itself when the Dominican appeared to perform more exorcisms using sacramentals and consecrated Hosts. Nicole recovered her sight, hearing and voice because of la Motte's efforts, a first victory of the power of the body of Christ over Beelzebub. This allowed Nicole to confess and to receive the Eucharist. The demon had been driven away, but only for a few days. He

⁶¹ Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 30.

⁶² Irena D. Backus (ed.), *Guillaume Postel et Jean Boulaese: De Summopere (1566) et Le Miracle De Laon (1566)* (Genève: Droz, 1995), p. 56; Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 53.

⁶³ Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France*, p. 27.

then reappeared stronger it seemed, accompanied by “more than twenty-nine other demons, (who) appeared to her in horrible visions, as ugly and hideous men, with naked swords and daggers who wanted to kill her; as enormous black cats as big as sheep, who wanted to scratch, bite and strangle her”.⁶⁴

Pierre de la Motte, with the help of other priests, chased away the demons with the Eucharist many times in the space of one hour. Beelzebub himself, pressured by the “body of Christ”, travelled through different parts of Nicole’s body, hiding in one of her arms and then in one of her legs.⁶⁵ La Motte had arranged for a scaffold to be erected at the church, enabling crowds to view the exorcism. This ‘mise-en-scène’ of the demoniac Nicole and of the exorcism rituals performed by la Motte were now available for public viewing and so gained a performance value and degree of impact that, in pedagogical terms, a traditional sermon delivered orally could not have achieved. Mary Suydam, in using performance theory in her analysis of medieval religious women, observes that the framing for a particular performance involves the space where it takes place, the people participating, the objects or symbols they use, and the sort of speech they utilize.⁶⁶ Applying the concept of ‘framing’ to the public performance of an exorcism, la Motte’s exorcisms in particular, helps to identify the assumptions made in defining this public exorcism. An exorcism was generally performed by an authorized cleric using liturgical rituals resembling those used in a baptism. La Motte had used baptism manuals as his

⁶⁴ “ (...) d’avantage de vmgt neuf autres diables, qui en horribles visions s’apparoissent a elle, comme hommes laids et hydeux, qui avec espees et dagues toutes nues la vouloyent tuer; comme gros chats nous aussi grands que moutons, qui la vouloyent esgrattigner, mordre et estrangler”: cited in Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 77.

⁶⁵ Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 79.

⁶⁶ Mary A. Suydam, “Background: An Introduction to Performance Studies”, in Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Zeigler (eds.), *Performance and Transformation, New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality* (New York: Macmillan, 1999), p. 11.

guide in how to exorcise Nicole, as these provided the formula and rituals for expelling the devil from a new born child: “I exorcise thee, unclean spirit... accursed one, damned and to be damned”.⁶⁷ La Motte had first used a ‘probative exorcism’ on Nicole in order to identify the true source of her torment, whether it was the spirit of her grandfather or the work of darker forces. Once her affliction was confirmed as demonic, Nicole was taken to the church to be subjected to further rituals aimed at expelling the demon. However, the rituals were opened to the public allowing those who gathered to view the possessed girl to participate in the rituals, effectively making the public part of the ritual. La Motte, with other priests and townspeople from Vervin and elsewhere also conducted processions and prayers for Nicole’s deliverance.⁶⁸ Catholic prayers were intended to appeal to divine intercession by a transfer of merit from each participating individual: “there was here a devolution of priestly power which allowed onlookers to participate in a sacramental, but it was also a public and communal action, overseen and staged-managed by priests, and mediated by the possessed”.⁶⁹ While the immediate goal of the exorcism was ultimately the deliverance of Nicole, with the introduction of the public, the rituals became a mix of public performance and religious instruction.

‘Effectiveness’ represents one of the preacher’s major concerns, and the work of performance theorists sheds light on how ‘efficacy’ separates the sermon from other types of public performance. For example, Richard Schechner establishes an important differentiation between ritual and theatre. He lays out the “efficacy-entertainment braid”, a metre that represents the fluctuating dominance of efficacy and entertainment

⁶⁷ Boulaese, *Thrésor*, fol. 29v; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 p. 21; Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, p. 30.

⁶⁸ Boulaese, *Le miracle de Laon en Lannoys*, p. 6.

⁶⁹ Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, p. 28.

in the history of Western theatre. The two poles of the braid, efficacy and entertainment, are always in tension. While Schechner cautions that “No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment”, he maintains that the distinction between ritual, aimed at efficacy, and theatre, directed towards entertainment, depends primarily on the context and the function of the performance. A performance that aims to be effective, to effect a transformation of the audience, generally possesses qualities that pertain to efficacy: these include specific intended results: a link to an absent ‘other’, often with a performer possessed or in a trance, expectation that the audience participates and believes, and vice versa for the performance that intends to entertain. In Schechner’s analysis, efficacy was the dominant concern for medieval and early modern church rituals, and we can include the sensational public exorcisms of Nicole Obry, whereas bards and troubadours were intended to provide entertainment.⁷⁰

Pierre de la Motte was the critical figure in this case. He was a Dominican priest whose training in theology and preaching made him an expert in opposing heresy. The context of the confessional conflicts points to how he intended to translate a demonizing rhetoric that had been articulated in traditional sermons delivered by Catholic preachers like François Le Picart in the early years of the French Reformation that associated Protestant heretics with the devil into a live performance that defended Catholic sacraments from demonic and heretical attacks. The prolonged exorcisms extended over his journey with Nicole Obry consistently involved controlling her demon through the power of the consecrated Host in front of other people or crowds. If he genuinely wanted to deliver her from her demonic torments, he would have exorcized her demons

⁷⁰ Richard Schechner, *Essays in Performance Theory* (1971; repr. New York, 1988), pp. 120-22.

then and there. La Motte had been the one to diagnose the possession. In more elaborate forms, exorcisms that did not immediately expel the demon were potentially very controversial.⁷¹ Nicole became famous for exactly this type of elaborate performance in which the possessing demon harangued and berated observers. La Motte became her principal exorcist, and in effect, her personal tour guide manager: “For Obry, this new relationship with an outsider to Vervin was the basis of a matrix of patronage which sustained the credibility of her public possession”.⁷² Creating a stir appears to have been exactly what la Motte had always intended. He arrived in Vervin only after passing through Laon, the local episcopal see, to obtain ‘orders and powers’ from the dean of Laon, Christofle de Héricourt, in order to obtain permission to exorcise Obry.⁷³ Once in Vervin, la Motte took Obry to the church and saw to the erection of a platform in the church to allow crowds a better view of the exorcisms. The erection of the scaffold for better viewing was far from typical and suggests that la Motte anticipated that the exorcisms would not be over quickly.⁷⁴

The polemical substance of Nicole’s possession became clear when Huguenot ministers arrived to “conjure”⁷⁵ the demon. Boulaese describes them as “hérétiques sacramentaires” or “sacramental heretics,”⁷⁶ underlining their rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation and their denial of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.⁷⁷ To

⁷¹ Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, p. 27.

⁷² Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, p. 27.

⁷³ Backus, *Le miracle de Laon: le déraisonnable, le raisonnable, l’apocalyptique et le politique*, p. 15.

⁷⁴ Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, p. 28.

⁷⁵ “*Conjurer*” in French or “to conjure” is the term used by Boulaese in his description of the event. Calvinist Protestants would have *prayed* for Obry’s deliverance.

⁷⁶ Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 86.

⁷⁷ Calvinism rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, mainly emphasizing the symbolic relationship between the ‘Body of Christ’ and the bread, as opposed to the Catholic belief that once the bread was

the “conjurations” of the Huguenot ministers, the demon responded mockingly “telling them that he can indeed compel them because they are his subjects. But that he cannot be compelled by them, because he is their master”.⁷⁸ When one of the Calvinist ministers approached, Beelzebub recognized him as one of his minions, asking facetiously whether “one demon could chase away another (...) the demon moored like a cow whenever the minister read Marot’s Psalms, asking him ‘Do you think you can scare me away with these pleasant songs that I helped to compose? I will do nothing of the sort for you because I am your master’”.⁷⁹ This was a paradoxical accusation of devil worship since the hymns all come from the Psalms of the Old Testament. How could the devil write religious hymns contained in the Christian Bible? The difference in cultural identity and the divergence in the interpretation of religious rituals dividing Catholics and Protestants allowed Catholics to interpret the Huguenot’s performance of scriptural hymns – they rejected any song texts not in the Psalms – as demonic perversions of authentic Christian rituals. Moreover, Catholic preachers consistently delivered sermons proclaiming that Protestants were distorting the Christian teachings of the Bible for demonic ends, a common argument that was made in François Le Picart’s sermons, as discussed in chapter 4, during the first decades of the French Reformation.⁸⁰

consecrated it truly became the ‘body of Christ’. See Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 61-62. This point is emphasized by Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, p. 66.

⁷⁸ “ (...) disant qu’il les peut bien contraindre parce qu’ils sont ses sujets. Mais qu’il ne peut être contraint d’eux, parce qu’il est leur maître”. Cited in Jehan Boulaese, *Le thresor et entiere histoire de la triomphante victoire du corps de Dieu sur l’esprit maling Beelzebub, obtenuë à Laon l’an mil cinq cens soixante six* (Paris: Chez Nicolas Chesneau, 1578), fol. 30 r.

⁷⁹ “Si un diable en pouvait chasser un autre?” Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p.87; “Il fesait la moue avec meuglement à l’autre qui lisait les psaumes de Marot, lui demandait: Me pèles-tu chasser avec tes plaisantes chansons que j’ai aidé à composer?”, *Le manuel*, p. 88.

⁸⁰ François Le Picart, *Les sermons et instructions Chrétiennes pour tous les jours de l’Advent, jusqu’à Noel & de tous les dimanches & fêtes depuis Noel jusqu’à Carême* (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1566), p. 122.

6.5 – Possession, Demons and Witches

Boulaese adds an interesting passage following Belzebug's confrontation with the Huguenots. In chapter thirty-eight of the *Manuel*, Boulaese recounts the arrival of a man dressed as a peasant, between the age of thirty and forty.⁸¹ The man announced that he had been sent, without being clear about who had sent him. He addressed the priest and casually asked him to release Obry into his custody so that he could take her to his house where they could be alone. His stated intention was to expel the demon by using 'certain words'. The priest judged this stranger to be either a demon or a witch and refused to release Obry. The priest consulted with one of the monks and the school's headmaster and then allowed the strange man to spend the night at the church, where it was noticed that the man ate and drank nothing during supper. The peasant entered the church the next day, knelt at the altar and then hid behind some servants. He then approached the possessed Obry, who looked firmly at him and said, "There you are Baltazo. How avaricious you are". Baltazo responded "How poor I am". Beelzebub did not torment Obry that night, at least not until four in the morning. While the headmaster was watching over Obry in the early hours of the morning, Baltazo addressed him to say that Beelzebub could not be chased away by faith alone. However, the soothsayer who had sent him kept a familiar demon that was able to transform and speak on his master's command. If called to the church, Beelzebub would be expelled without hesitation by the soothsayer's power. The soothsayer apparently lived in Dormans-sur-Marne. The headmaster responded that only a miserable person would agree to such a solution and that Obry's family would trust only in God to cure her spiritual affliction, without any

⁸¹ See chapter XXXVIII (38) in Boulaese, *Le manuel*, pp. 91-94.

assistance from the devil. Baltazo left Vervin early that morning. The next night, Beelzebub spoke to Obry's husband and complained that his companion had been chased away. Beelzebub declared that if Obry had been left alone with Baltazo, he would have taken her away, never to be seen again, and that both of them, along with the other thirty demons, would all have taken possession of her. Beelzebub explained that in order to appear corporally, Baltazo had taken the body of a dead criminal who had been hanged to death for his crimes near Arlon. Boulaese concludes the chapter with the remark that demons do not eat or drink, just as the strange peasant had failed to do during supper at the church. This conclusive detail thus confirmed the visit from a demon possessing a corpse intending to kidnap Obry in order to also possess her, undoubtedly under the orders of some soothsayer. The story of the strange peasant who wanted to kidnap Obry adds another dimension to the demonic character of the overall narrative. It increases the sense of danger by showing that sinister forces outside the church walls were interested in the outcome of Obry's affliction. Witches and soothsayers were actively conspiring with demons to fool men of the church into releasing Obry into their awaiting clutches and claim victory. However, the discriminating priest was immediately suspicious and accurately judged the man to be either a demon or a witch, thus saving Obry from eternal torment. Ultimately, this chapter raised the stakes of the conflict, because it gave the sense of a larger demonic conspiracy not only intent on winning the battle over Obry's affliction, but also working to undermine the Church.

It is not clear why no witches or Huguenots were made out to be more directly involved in Obry's possession. Obry herself had made three witchcraft accusations,

asserting that spells and curses were the cause of her affliction. However, these indirect accusations did not lead to any prosecutions and were not relied on by Obry's chroniclers as explanations of her possession. Speaking through Obry, Beelzebub had accused "some women" of witchcraft, without being more specific. According to the French lawyer Barthélémy de la Faye's account of the miracle, at some point early in her possession Obry had accused a gypsy woman of bewitching her.⁸² In Boulaese's account, it was a man who had done so.⁸³ While still at her father's house, Beelzebub stated that Nicole's affliction had been caused by an event which had occurred four years earlier, on July 26, 1561, a day dedicated to Saint Anne as well as an important feast day for Vervins. Beelzebub claimed that Obry had become possessed as a result of a blasphemy uttered by her mother. Nicole and her sister Isabelle had attended a dance held in honour of the feast day, with Isabelle wearing an amber rosary given to her by her mother. Apparently, the rosary was stolen by a woman there, which angered her mother to the point that she blamed Nicole for the loss of the rosary and yelled for "the great devil to take her away". Beelzebub then explained: "Not long afterward, great devil that I am, I came to take what the mother had promised me".⁸⁴

While Boulaese's narrative of Obry's possession functions as confirmation of Catholic religious truth, it is also a polemical work that exposes Calvinist Huguenots, along with witches, as the devil's minions. It is conceivable, and very probable, that la Motte wanted to promote the polemical and demonizing aspect of Obry's possession. If

⁸² Barthélémy de la Fay, *Energumenicus*, (Paris, Sebastian Nivelles, 1571), pp. 88-89.

⁸³ Boulaese, *Thresor*, p. 124.

⁸⁴ "Le grand Diable te puisse emporter", said Nicole's mother; "Comme grand diable, je l'ai prise à moi, & j'ai toujours taché de l'emporter: parce que la mère me l'avait donné", said Beelzebub, in Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 59.

the devil himself said that the Huguenots were his, this would become a powerful weapon of propaganda during an intense period of hostilities between French Catholics and Calvinists. Obry's possession occurred in the context of the initial outbreak of armed conflicts between the Catholics and the Huguenot. The first of the six French Wars of Religion that would ravage France until the end of the sixteenth century had ended in a provisional truce between the Huguenots and the Catholics with the Edict of Ambroise issued on March 19, 1563. The Edict guaranteed rights and privileges to the Huguenots allowing them to practice their faith when specific conditions were met. It allowed Protestant services in the private households of nobles and in one designated section outside of selected fortified towns in each *bailage* or *sénéchaussé*.⁸⁵ Profound tensions between French Catholics and Protestants remained as many Catholics believed that this compromise would allow agents of the devil to live among them and continue to erode and corrupt French Catholic unity in a kind of national state of demonic possession. As discussed in greater detail in chapters 5 and 6, the sermons of François Le Picart and the pamphlets of Artus Désiré associated Protestant heretics with the devil, equated their speeches with blasphemy, and described Protestant services as 'perverted' and 'false sacraments'.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ See Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 55; Robert J. Knecht, *The French Religious Wars 1562-1598* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), p. 106; Jonathan Powis, "Order, religion, and the magistrates of a provincial Parlement in sixteenth-century France" in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte/Archive for Reformation History*, vol. 71 (1980), pp. 180-197.

⁸⁶ François le Picart preached that "one who teaches false doctrines is a Judas", i.e.: a traitor, p. 132; "Lutherans and heretics disobey God and contaminate the Church", p. 52. See *Les sermons et instructions chrestiennes pour tous les jours de l'advent ... pour tous les dimanches & fêtes de l'année*, vol. 2, (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1567); Artus Désiré addressed both Catholic and Protestant audiences in his pamphlets. Addressing Protestants, he wrote "However, therefore, with your perverted and false sacramentals, who argue with mad questions how is made the transmutation of the bread and wine into the body of Jesus Christ". See *Le deffensaire de la foy chrestienne, avec le miroer des francs taupins, autrement nommez luthériens, Nouvellement composé* (Paris: 1567), p. 84.

From this perspective, Obry's possessed body represented the body of all the faithful Catholics.⁸⁷ Her public torment acted as visual display of the consequences were the Catholics to lose the battle against the demonic Huguenots. The conjurations of Beelzebub and the other demons continued at Vervin until early January. When the bishop of Laon, Jean de Bours, arrived on 4 January 1566, Beelzebub said that he would only leave Nicole's body for the bishop, adding that he would not do so at Vervin,⁸⁸ essentially confirming that the possession would be lengthy and also underlining the importance of rising through the Church hierarchy for the desired ultimate outcome. The demon also implicitly revealed his inferiority in relation to Catholic authorities by singling out the bishop as the only one with enough power to expel him. By January 19, however, the demon was in full force and refused to leave Obry unless she was brought to Our Lady of Liesse. On January 22, the group therefore left Vervin for Laon, making their first stop in Liesse. They were guided by a boy they met on the road, dressed all in white.⁸⁹ Arriving in Liesse on 23 January, a large crowd attended the service at the church for what promised to be an 'extraordinary ceremony'. A procession preceded the service, followed by a sermon pronounced by la Motte on "Libera nos a malo", or "deliver us from evil", which greatly moved the congregation and incited them to pray to the Holy Mother for Obry's deliverance. Obry was brought forth and placed in front of the shrine dedicated to the Virgin. La Motte then performed a public exorcism. Interestingly, la Motte interrogated the demon while conjuring him to leave Nicole's body. The responses confirmed the real presence of the Eucharist, compromising the

⁸⁷ Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, p. 59 and Crouzet, "A Woman and the Devil", p. 211

⁸⁸ Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 85.

⁸⁹ Boulaese implies the boy was an angel, *Le manuel*, p. 102.

Calvinists' position on this critical issue. La Motte questioned the demon on the number of demons possessing Obry. The demon responded that there were thirty of them currently possessing Obry. La Motte, as minister of God, commanded the demons leave. The demon responded that he would not depart for him. La Motte then presented the Holy Cross and the Eucharist to the demon and commanded him and all his followers to leave. Obry's body became twisted and contorted. She finally gave a great sigh, but was left deaf, mute and blind. La Motte administered the Eucharist which allowed Obry to regain some composure and her senses. That night, the demon spoke to Obry in her sleep, telling her that he would choke her to death. An exorcism was performed again the next day. When conjured to leave, the demon responded that he would not, but that twenty-six of his followers, including Baltazo, had departed Obry's body and were sent to Geneva, a Calvinist stronghold. The demon jested that la Motte should leave some demons for the bishop to expel.⁹⁰

On 24 January, the company left for Pierrepont, still on their way to their ultimate destination of Laon. They brought Obry directly to the church once they arrived. La Motte performed an exorcism and expelled one more of the remaining demons called Legio, in reference to the biblical legion of demons who had entered a herd of swine and threw themselves into the sea.⁹¹ That night, an attempt was made against Obry's life by a Huguenot wielding a pistol. A group of men had entered the inn where Obry and her entourage were lodging. Their goal was to stop Obry from reaching Laon. One of them attempted to enter her room but was confronted by la Motte. With a pistol in hand, the enraged Huguenot accused the Catholic clergy of abusing the people,

⁹⁰ Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 108-113.

⁹¹ Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 116; Mark 5: 1-20.

to which la Motte calmly responded that he hoped to be brought to justice if he was guilty of a crime.⁹²

Obry and the company arrived in Laon on 24 January 1566 and were greeted by the bishop Jean de Bours. The young demoniac was brought to the cathedral on January 25 in a large procession surrounded by priests and family. A platform was erected at the centre of the cathedral allowing the large crowd to view the bishop's public exorcisms, allegedly witnessed by 10, 000 people.⁹³ Regardless of whether this estimate is inflated, the event was well attended. The public confrontation between Beelzebub and the bishop was the critical event that conveyed the ultimate purpose of Obry's possession: to discredit the Huguenots as the devil's minions, and to defend the truth of Catholicism by validating the Real Presence in the Host through its power to expel the demons during the exorcisms. Obry's performance authenticated the doctrine of the Real Presence when the demon reacted with violent revulsion once faced with the Host. Between her arrival at Laon on January 24 and until February 8, after the usual processions, prayers, sermons and mass, Obry was exorcised every day by the bishop in front of large crowds.

6.6 – Preaching a Sermon as a Performance

Sarah Ferber points out an impressive engraving by Thomas Belot “depicting the exorcisms at Laon, printed in 1569”⁹⁴ and included in Boulaese's *Le trésor*, that depicts an account of Obry's possession through a legend describing each of the corresponding vignettes. The images form a sequence of the significant events during

⁹² Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 118.

⁹³ Boulaese, *Le trésor*, p. 355.

⁹⁴ Sarah Ferber, *Possession*, p. 31.

Obry's exorcisms at Laon: how she was carried into the church, her face distorted with her tongue sticking out, men struggling to control her and people praying for her deliverance, while demons are flying out of the cathedral after they were successfully expelled. The relevant text concerning the Bishop Jean de Bours's confrontation with Beelzebub reads:

At Laon, then, the demoniac is taken to the Church and in procession, after which there is preaching by a good Cordelier (friar). Then the bishop says the Mass, after which he does the conjuration.

To which Beelzebub responds: I entered here by the commandment of God, for the sin of the people, to show that I am a devil here to convert my hardened Huguenot and to make all one or all the other, and by the blood 'Dieu' (God), I must accomplish my task and my office. I will make them all one.

To which the bishop responds: it will be Jesus who will make them all one, in one sole religion. You must show who your master is, the one who will make you leave.

Beelzebub responds: Who? Your John the white? [Jean le blanc refers to the Real Presence in the bread of the Host].⁹⁵

The bishop says: that is why he is pursuing you.

Beelzebub responds: Ha, ha, I am constrained by it, there is the Hoc there, there is the Hoc.⁹⁶ This he repeats several times, at which those present marvelled greatly.

The bishop then elevates the precious Body of God, saying: Look, here is the precious Body of our Saviour Jesus Christ your master. You will say not one more word now. I command you in the name and in the virtue of the precious Body of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, here present, that now you will leave directly the body of this creature of God, without harming anyone, and will go the depth of hell, to be tormented there, and that you will not come back here. Get out evil spirit, get out, here is your master, get out.

Before which, the demoniac, having the face of a great devil, levitates six feet up in the air, and cries very horribly. The people filled the Church, the pulpit, and the vaults, seeing and hearing it, and redoubling their cries to God of 'mercy'.

⁹⁵ Calvinists ridiculed the sacrament of the Eucharist by referring to it as 'Jean le blanc' (Jack White) to demonstrate that Catholics worship is essentially white flour. See Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken: The Calvinist doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 154.

⁹⁶ 'Hoc' refers to the words used by the priest to consecrate the Host: "Hoc est corpus meum"; "this is my body".

Then, hard, stiff, mute, blind deaf, without any movement or feeling, she is shown to the view of all, as a statue of wood, which was also ascertained by the experience of touching her.⁹⁷



Figure 2: *Declaration des lettres de l'Alphabet*

This confrontation was the last public appearance of Beelzebub. On 8 February 1566, the demon receded into Obry's left arm before leaving her body. This is the triumphalist version of the miracle as told by Boulaese. This story brings together literary, dramatic and religious genres to represent a powerful live representation of

⁹⁷ 'Declaration des lettres de l'Alphabet', the title of the engraving by Thomas Belot, showing the vignettes of the miracle of Laon in the Chaubard edition of Boulaese's *Miracle de Laon en Laynoys* (unpaginated). The verbatim version of the text is also found in Boulaese, *Le Thresor et entiere histoire de la triomphante victoire du corps de Dieu sur l'esprit maling Beelzebub, obtenue a Laon l'an mil cinq cens soixante six* (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1578), unpaginated between pp. 8-9.

Catholic propaganda. As such, the utterances attributed to Beelzebub can be defined as sermons, even if they were conceived through a dramatic *mise-en-scène* put on by the collaboration of a young girl and her exorcists. In fact, the message concerning the truth of Catholic doctrine conveyed by the demon was almost certainly more effective in its collective reception than a traditional sermon. However, la Motte's strategy was risky. Relying on a young girl to drive home a moral religious message, all the while discrediting Calvinism by associating the Huguenots with the devil, could have easily failed.⁹⁸ In that event, La Motte and Obry would have become frauds, which is what some Huguenots had attempted to expose.⁹⁹ In any event, the strategy paid off. The story of the miracle became official, and many accounts of this Catholic triumph were written and published.¹⁰⁰ Its impact was supposedly measurable by the conversion of many Huguenots who witnessed the final expulsion of Beelzebub who proclaimed: "I now believe, because I have seen it. Never again will I be a Huguenot. Damned be those who deceived me. Oh! Now I know well how the mass is good."¹⁰¹ Florimond de Ramond, a future judge at the Parlement of Bordeaux and an eye witness to Obry's successful deliverance, wrote this after his re-conversion: "Finally Beelzebub, conjured

⁹⁸ For instance, Marthe Brossier's status as a possessed demoniac was ultimately discredited in 1598, see Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism*, p. 41.

⁹⁹ Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁰ Boulaese published many of the foundational texts describing the miracle: the pamphlet entitled *Le Miracle de Laon en Lanoys*, A.H. Chaubard (ed.), (Lyon: Sauvegarde Historique, 1955) in Latin, French, Spanish, German and Italian; *L'Abbrégée histoire du grand miracle par notre sauveur & Seigneur Jesus Chirst en la sainte Hostie du Sacrement de l'autel faict à Laon 1566*, (Paris: Tomas Belot, 1573); *Le Thresor et entiere histoire de la triomphante victoire du corps de Dieu sur l'esprit maling Beelzebub, obtenue a Laon l'an mil cinq cens soixante six*, (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1578) is an assemblage of eye witness accounts by the dean of the cathedral Christofle Héricourt, a canon Nicolas Despinoy and the royal notary Guillaume Gorret; Boulaese collaborated with Guillaume Postel to produce another account in Latin around the late 1560's: *De Summopere*, critical edition translated and notes by Irena Backus, (Geneva: Droz, 1995). The Paris *parlementaire* and Boulaese's friend Barthélémy de la Faye published a Latin treaty *Energumenicus*, (Paris: Sebastien Nivelles, 1571).

¹⁰¹ Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 219.

by the presence of the precious body of Jesus Christ [the Host], left and quit his prison [Nicole's body] after having made smoke and caused two claps of thunder, leaving a thick fog that encircled the bell towers of the church, and all those in attendance were delighted at such a great marvel. How long, oh impenitent souls, will you rot in your incredulity and abuse the patience of God?"¹⁰² The miracle was celebrated by the people of Laon every year until the French Revolution.

The entertainment value produced by the dramatic representation of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation through Obry's performance created a potentially controversial overlap between drama and sermon genres. The work of Manfred Pfister, who differentiates drama from other forms of literature, can be applied to analyse 'sermons' produced in dramatic public exorcisms. Pfister uses the concept of "multimediality" in his analysis of dramatic texts. Drama employs acoustic and visual codes and channels, such as voice quality and intonation. Most other forms of literature employ descriptions of gestures and properties of the setting. Furthermore, dramatic texts have two layers: first, the written text and the enactment it requires and second, the features that are added by the production. Pfister also observes that drama differs from literature in its "collectivity" of reception and production because it requires an audience and is produced by a group of players.¹⁰³ Pfister's concept of "multimediality" proves highly useful in defining Beelzebub's utterances as sermons through Obry's dramatic performance. Traditional sermons, especially in Obry's exorcisms, involve acoustic and visual elements, as well as a degree of physical performance. As Beverly Kienzle points

¹⁰² Florimond de Raemond, *L'Anti-Christ* (Lyon: 1597), p. 417.

¹⁰³ Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, translated from German by John Halliday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 6-12.

out, texts of sermons contain a dual layering: they often indicate what a preacher and the audience actually did, and a second layer of production that historians attempt to reconstruct. This ‘reconstruction’ was done in Boulaese’s chronicles of the events leading up to the miracle. While these works are essentially religious propaganda, it is the moral religious instruction they convey that is significant and in this case requires ‘deconstruction’ by modern historians in order to extract the unspoken assumptions concerning religious culture during this period. Moreover, sermons and theatre productions both have a collective reception. A traditional sermon is usually produced by one person, not a group of actors, although Beelzebub’s speeches were usually indirectly prompted and necessarily required interaction with at least one other person. For Kienzle, sermons nevertheless differ importantly from theatre in two aspects for their performance, which helps to incorporate Beelzebub’s message into the category of ‘sermons’: “the preacher is expected to meet moral requisites and to serve as an intermediary for God’s word; and the sermon’s purpose is unequivocally moral and religious”.¹⁰⁴ Theatre productions may aim to transmit a moral and religious message, but this is not a requirement of the genre. The observance of religious rituals – mass, processions, prayers and exorcisms – is the principal element that differentiates Obry’s public exorcisms from theatre. The entertainment, or rather the captivating effect of Obry’s dramatic public exorcisms was not an end in itself, because the rituals also conveyed religious instructions concerning behaviours and beliefs. Rather, Obry’s public exorcisms relied on theatrical elements to animate a now visible and tangible Catholic doctrine.

¹⁰⁴ Beverly M. Kienzle, “Medieval Sermons and their Performance: Theory and Record”, in Carolyn Muessig (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon, and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 93.

Medieval and early modern preaching theorists frequently pointed out the similarities between theatre and preaching, but usually in order to warn preachers not to delve into the domain of theatre. *Ars praedicandi* did allow a degree of ‘entertainment’ such as *exempla* and narrations in order to arouse the curiosity and emotions of the listeners. In particular, they exhorted the preacher to use the lives of saints to convince the public to follow the moral teachings of the sermons. However, *artes praedicandi* usually attempted to dissuade the preacher from allowing his sermon to stray into the domain of theatre. For instance, Alan of Lille gives a clear directive to preachers that they should limit the relationship between theatre and preaching. He warned preachers not to use an entertaining style in their delivery in order to please listeners, as this had the potential to seriously compromise the redemptive intention of the sermon:

For preaching in itself ought not to have jesting words or childish comments, or rhythmic melodies and metrical lines, such words are made to attract the ears rather than to instruct the mind. This kind of preaching is a theatrical one similar to mime; hence it has to be condemned in every way. About this kind of preaching, the prophet says (Isaiah 1:22): ‘The tavern keepers mix water with wine’.¹⁰⁵

However, Obry’s demon did not deliver his sermons in the traditional manner as prescribed by de Lille, such as by a preacher to his typical congregation or audience. It was even Obry’s demon who demanded that the exorcisms be performed publicly on a scaffold once they arrived in Laon. The platform in the cathedral of Laon was taken down two days after it was erected. The exorcisms were moved to a private chapel “to avoid sedition”. Beelzebub protested “that it was not right to hide what God wanted to

¹⁰⁵ Alan of Lille, *Summa de Arte Praedicatoria*, in *Alani de insulis doctoris universalis opera omnia*, J.-P. Migne (ed.) (Paris, 1855), CCX, cols. pp. 109–98 (col. 112): “Praedicatio enim in se, non debet habere verba scurrilia, vel puerilia vel rythmorum melodias et consonantias metrorum, quae potius fiunt ad aures demulcendas, quam ad animum instruendum, quae praedicatio teatralis est et mimica, et ideo omnifarie contemnenda, de tali praedicatione dicitur a propheta: Caupones vestri miscent aquam vino.”

be manifested and known to all the world” and claimed that he would not leave Nicole’s body except in “that great brothel”, specifically in the cathedral of Laon and on the platform.¹⁰⁶ Obry’s affliction progressed through the official church hierarchy and her case became credible when it was taken on by Catholic authorities. To explain why the demon’s utterances were taken seriously by both Catholic authorities and the Huguenots, as well as the religiously mixed crowds who attended the exorcisms we can rely on Gary K. Waite’s argument concerning the demonization of heretics in Reformation Europe. For Waite, cases of demonic possession during the Reformation were expressions of latent religious tensions: “In the 1560s especially, the debate about demonic possession climaxed with a number of prominent possessions that were deeply entangled in religious conflicts which had helped create the psychological conditions behind such ecstatic behaviour and which reshaped the possessions into a spectacular feature of religious propaganda”.¹⁰⁷

Accordingly, for Catholics, the miracle of Laon was proof of the Church’s authority. Boulaese relies on the argument of ‘authority’ of the Church to explain how la Motte initially calmed the demon Beelzebub with conjurations and the Eucharist: “where singularly is seen the ecclesiastical authority over all the devils”.¹⁰⁸ To help us understand this, Maurice Bloch explores the relationship between authority and performance. Bloch observes that religious speech must conform to fixed patterns in order to be recognized as authoritative and sacred. Bloch analyses the differences

¹⁰⁶ D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), pp. 22-23; Boulaese, *Le trésor*, pp. 252-253, 258.

¹⁰⁷ Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 139.

¹⁰⁸ Boulaese, *Trésor*, 30 r.

between “everyday” and “formalized” speech. Formalized speech is associated with power and authority, which occurs in two major anthropological categories: religious rituals and political authority. Bloch specifically defines sermons as examples of “formalised oratory in a religious context”.¹⁰⁹ In the context of religious rituals, Bloch states that the religious leader gains their authority by relinquishing their individual expression and speaking for a supernatural being: “The creation of this other supernatural being is best seen in possession, in which the notion that two beings are present, one supernatural and one natural, is explicit”.¹¹⁰

It was exactly the legitimacy of Obry’s status as a possessed demoniac that the Huguenots contested. The Huguenots, who considered Nicole’s illness a natural one and a proof of papist superstition, convinced the bishop to allow her to be interrogated to ascertain whether she was faking her symptoms. On January 27, after pins had been stuck under the fingernails of her limp left arm, Nicole became agitated and frenzied, then unconscious with barely a pulse. Proof that she was possessed was then witnessed by several Huguenots when the canon Marin Pelletier recited the *Confiteor* and *Ave Salus* and placed the Eucharist to her lips.¹¹¹ In response, she lifted her head, opened her eyes and made the sign of the cross. “Videte, videte miraculum”; “Behold, behold the miracle”, the canon declared to those present. Despite this amazing occurrence, the Huguenots continued to press the Duke of Montmorency to intercede. On January 28, a large crowd saw Obry lash out at Jean Carlier, a Huguenot doctor, using her once paralyzed left arm, which suddenly became overpowering. Then “she walked on the bed

¹⁰⁹ Maurice Bloch, “Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation: Is Religion an Extreme Form of Traditional authority?”, *Archives européennes de sociologie*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1974), p. 68.

¹¹⁰ Maurice Bloch, “Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation”, p. 78.

¹¹¹ Boulaese, *Le manuel*, pp. 130-135.

with her feet, her head twisted around backwards, her stomach bloated, her arms waving wildly in the air”.¹¹² Carlier tried to force medicine down her mouth, which Catholics initially believed that he was trying to poison her, only they saw a large black creature crawling out of her mouth, a kind of large fly which “people declared to be Beelzebub himself”.¹¹³ A priest then gave Obry the Eucharist, after which she slowly regained her senses and thanked God by making the sign of the cross.

The miracle carried potential political ramifications during a period of intense religious and political tensions between Catholic and Calvinist factions. Obry’s case was brought to the attention of both the Prince de Condé, the most prominent French Protestant leader and the young king Charles IX. The Duke of Montmorency, a moderate Catholic and governor of the Ile de France, was concerned that the public processions would increase the threat of urban violence and reignite the civil war. He had limited the processions to the cathedral after the first three days of public processions in the streets. The authorities’ anxieties were also felt when they would not let Obry return to Laon. Following her deliverance, Obry and her entourage attempted to return to Laon on April 6. Agents of the prince de Condé visited her outside the city where they prodded her with metal instruments, screamed in her ears and threatened to whip her unless she confess her deception. One of Obry’s most ardent supporters, the canon Jean Despinos met with the prince in order to convince him to allow her entry back into the city. His meeting with the prince turned into a theological disputation, in

¹¹² Boulaese, *Le manuel*, p. 138.

¹¹³ Carlier gave her two potions to drink. The first vial contained a liquid so red it appeared black, giving Obry convulsions. The second vile contained a clear liquid made from “eau de vie” and rosemary. See J. Roger, *Histoire de Nicole Vervins, d’après les historiens contemporains et témoins oculaires ou le triomphe du saint sacrement sur le démon à Laon en 1566* (Paris: H. Plon, 1863), p. 458.

which Despinois declared a miracle to have occurred through the transubstantiation of ordinary bread. When Obry's mother met with the prince, he offered her one hundred *écus*, along with threats, if she admitted that all of her daughter's action had been part of an elaborate deception. The prince finally met with the young girl herself. The Calvinist minister Jean de l'Espine explained to Nicole that if Satan had left her, it was not due to a piece of bread but rather through God's power alone. When the prince pressed her on this point, she admitted that this explanation was plausible. According to Boulaese, Nicole and her husband were offered great wealth if they abandoned their religion. When they refused, Obry was imprisoned for six weeks awaiting her trial for fraud and subjected to daily Calvinist sermons, seated next to the prince.¹¹⁴ Finally, a royal writ arrived on June 6 ordering her release. The writ, dated June 1, had been obtained by Obry's father who had filed an appeal with the crown on behalf of his daughter on May 22.¹¹⁵ The young girl related the story of the miracle when she and her family met with the king. He arrived in Laon in early August and ordered the dean of the chapter, Christofle de Héricourt, to write the history of this miracle. He also slipped twenty *écus* to Nicole's husband to ensure the family went back to Vervin.¹¹⁶

Beyond the individual story of Nicole de Vervin, the story of the miracle of Laon became a powerful weapon for Catholics in their effort to demonize the Huguenots. Denis Crouzet argues that the vigorous preaching and provocative processions at Laon provided a model for the strategies of the fanatical Holy League in the last two decades

¹¹⁴ Boulaese, *Le manuel*, pp. 354-356.

¹¹⁵ Boulaese, *Le manuel*, pp. 356-357.

¹¹⁶ Irena D. Backus, *Le miracle de Laon : le déraisonnable, le raisonnable, l'apocalyptique et le politique dans les récits du Miracle de Laon, 1566-1578* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1995), p. 20.

of the sixteenth century.¹¹⁷ The Laon miracle was the first exorcism to make visually accessible to a larger public a ritual that was traditionally performed in private as well as a visual display of the demonic nature of the Huguenots.¹¹⁸ The story of the miracle circulated rapidly, especially through the 1566 visual print and the numerous publications which chronicled the event. The textual and pictorial accounts of this performance served as models for both exorcists and subsequent victims of possession.¹¹⁹ It is significant that this case occurred during a time of official peace, suggesting that militant Catholics viewed exorcisms as a form of war against the Huguenots pursued by other means.

Since the Middle Ages, cases of demonic possession had been a means to validate official Catholic doctrines and provided a justification to pursue the opponents of the Church by demonstrating that they were in league with the devil.¹²⁰ As discussed in detail in chapters 2 and 3, the Dominican preacher Vincent Ferrer had confirmed the date of birth of the Antichrist to be 1403 through the mouths of individuals possessed by demons. The Dominican inquisitor Nicolas Jacquier had confirmed the existence of an underground sect of devil worshippers by interrogating possessed nuns at a convent in St. Galmier in 1452, justifying the initiation of an inquisition against the preacher Guillaume Adeline who was supposedly preaching the opposite. In a much grander and spectacular fashion, the demonic possession of Nicole Obery became a means to expose

¹¹⁷ Denis Crouzet, "A Woman and the Devil", p. 211.

¹¹⁸ The *Rituale Romanum* states that exorcisms should not take place in public (1614 edition), p. 418.

¹¹⁹ For instance, the case of Marthe Bossier (1598-1599) is often compared by historians with Nicole Obery who note the striking similarities of the two cases, see Laura Weigert, *French visual culture and the making of medieval theater* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 192; Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism*, pp. 40-59.

¹²⁰ Sarah Ferber, "Possession" in Richard M. Golden (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition* (Santa Barbara: ABC Clío, 2006), p. 923.

in vivid and compelling performances the true divine power invested in the consecrated Host. The Protestants' rejection of this Catholic sacrament confirmed that their religion had been inspired by the devil, justifying their complete extermination as argued in the sermons delivered by Catholic preachers since the beginning of the Reformation. This dual aspect, confirming religious truth while discrediting opponents by painting them as 'demonic', was a defining feature of famous cases of demonic possession in Early Modern France. The famous possession case of Marthe Brossier in Paris in 1599 was a kind of imitation of Nicole Obery's miraculous deliverance in Laon in 1566. Catholic preachers in Paris had been delivering sermons denouncing the ascension of the converted Henri IV, a former Huguenot, and his promulgation of the Edict of Nantes making Protestantism legal in France. Brossier's public exorcisms revealed that Beelzebub, the same demon that afflicted Obery, was back to denounce the Huguenots of France and the Edict that was passed in 1598: "Her Beelzebub preached against heresy and the Edict, while the preachers of the city echoed the message".¹²¹

Sensational cases of demonic possession continued into seventeenth-century France. The collective demonic possession of the Ursuline nuns at the convent of Loudun in 1632 combined all the demonizing elements contained in anti-heretical sermons preached since the fifteenth century. The exorcisms of the nuns revealed that the charismatic Catholic parish priest Urbain Grandier was the cause of their affliction. The city of Loudun was populated by both Catholics and Huguenots. Grandier was a formidable opponent of Protestant heretics, but he made the mistake of seducing the daughter of one of the most important and rich citizens of the city whose family

¹²¹ Pearl, *The Crime of Crimes*, p. 48.

connexions included Cardinal Richelieu, one of the most important advisers to the king. Rumours of Grandier's life of sexual depravity eventually spread to the convent. In the context of the city's religious tensions, the demons possessing the nuns denounced Grandier as their master. Grandier was discredited and was found guilty of satanic witchcraft, a case reminiscent of the preacher Guillaume Adeline who was similarly discredited and accused of devil worship in 1452 after having allegedly preached on the 'illusion' of the witches' sabbath, as discussed in chapter 3. The sentence following Grandier's trial stated that he was guilty "of the crime of sorcery, evil spells, and the possession visited upon some Ursuline nuns of this town".¹²²

These seemingly fringe occurrences of religious fanaticism in sixteenth-century France, the repression of witches and public demonic exorcisms, were in fact indicators of a pervasive discourse that associated heresy and witchcraft with the devil. During the fifteenth century, the fight against medieval heretics, along with internal divisions within the Church originating from the Conciliarist conflict, had allowed preachers, especially itinerant Dominican preachers, to formulate a narrative that placed the devil at the heart of all religious dissension. This paradigm was at the ready for Catholic preachers to project the devil onto Protestant heretics in the sixteenth century. The great size of the religious conflicts provoked by the Reformation amplified the magnitude of this demonizing discourse even more. The persistent association of Protestants with the devil in Catholic sermons led to the massive religious massacres of St. Bartholomew's Day 1572, the repression of witchcraft and sensational cases of demonic possession in which the demons themselves confirmed what Catholic preachers had been preaching all

¹²² Robert Rapley, *A Case of Witchcraft: The Trial of Urbain Grandier* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), p. 3.

along, that demons were working with heretics and witches in order to destroy Christianity.

Conclusion

This study of Catholic preachers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who delivered sermons linking the devil, the apocalypse, and the Antichrist with heresy and witchcraft shows that their activity was part of a strategy aimed at defending and validating Catholic sacraments and the Church's exclusivity over spiritual salvation. Eliminating the enemies of God and the Church – heretics and witches allied with the devil – was one of the practical outcomes of this discourse. One of the historical paradoxes generated by their demonizing discourse was the creation of an imaginary satanic religion that was a negative reversal of the Church, thus providing counterevidence validating Catholic doctrines. The existence of medieval heretical sects, and Protestants in the sixteenth century, who openly rejected the authority of the Church and the sacraments led to the progressive construction of a demonizing discourse which presumed the existence of an all-inclusive demonic conspiracy. This political aspect of accusations of demonic corruption was also a means of individually demonstrating one's own orthodoxy.

Tracing the demonizing discourse of itinerant preachers in the fifteenth century and into the Reformation period of the sixteenth century highlights the parallels between the effects of Catholic preachers' dehumanizing sermons that spilled over from the late Middle Ages into the early modern period. In the fifteenth century, zealous preachers like Vincent Ferrer whipped up anxieties concerning the End Times and the dangers heretics posed to individual salvation right on the eve of the transformation of the image of the witch from an individual performer of harmful magic into a member of a sect of devil-worshipping heretics. In the sixteenth century, preachers like François Le Picart

and Simon Vigor called Protestantism the ‘religion of the devil’. Beyond the horrific large-scale massacres of the Huguenots, the prosecution of witches accused of serving Satan and sensational cases of demonic possession soon followed. The crossing of periods from the late medieval and early modern periods shows a similar dynamic concerning the Catholic Church’s earlier response to the threat of heresy in which preaching against heresy led to the transformation of practitioners of magic into an imagined sect of devil worshippers.

There is a methodological difficulty in establishing a direct relationship of causality between a demonizing discourse and the persecution of religious deviants. There were many structural obstacles to overcome before instances of judicial repression, military action or popular violence could occur. However, there is clearly a correlation between public sermons directed towards groups of people designated as ‘demonic’ and resulting actions consciously intended to eliminate them specifically because they are ‘demonic’. There was also the potential for the preachers’ message to be distorted or misunderstood by the audience. It is difficult to plot the exact turning point from which an anti-heresy rhetoric turned into popular demands to attack witches. This could occur in regions where there was a confluence of other factors such as prevalent misfortunes, the ravages of war, infant deaths, famine and disease. Individual contexts can help to illustrate this.

For instance, Vincent Ferrer’s motivation in preaching on the arrival of the Antichrist and the impending apocalypse was to reform the beliefs and behaviours of his audiences in order to ensure their salvation. Philip Daileader warns us that: “One should not make too much of the possible connection between Vincent and the rise of witch

hunting – the friar went a great many places that were not in the forefront of witch hunting”.¹ We can agree that Ferrer was not attempting to instigate large scale witch trials with his sermons. However, Ferrer delivered sermons in the first decade of the fifteenth century (1399-1409) in the Alps telling people that Waldensian heretics were in league with the Antichrist, denounced the popular magical practices of peasant communities and informed his audiences that demons brought people who performed such rituals straight to hell. In front of enormous crowds armed with the spiritual authority of speaking for God, he made these terrifying public declarations on top of a consistent message that Judgement Day could occur at any time. For many people, he further confirmed his divine mission when he performed exorcisms to heal their afflictions. In the context of the fifteenth-century Alps, in Switzerland and Dauphiné in particular, Ferrer’s sermons projected deep demonic fears where there existed the infrastructure of the Franciscan inquisition already pursuing Waldensian heretics and where prevalent misfortunes were popularly attributed to the harmful magic of vengeful neighbours.² These were the exact elements – demonic agency, conspiratorial sect, harmful magic – that when combined became the core definition of satanic witchcraft in demonological treatises and witch trials less than two decades later, c. 1420 when accusations of devil worship began to appear in trials and the 1430s when the demonological literature solidified the conception of satanic witchcraft.³

¹ Philip Daileader, *Saint Vincent Ferrer, His World and Life: Religion and Society in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2016), p. 54.

² Kathrin Utz Tremp, “The Heresy of Witchcraft in Western Switzerland and Dauphiné”, *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft*, vol. 6, no. 1 (summer 2010), p. 5.

³ Pierrette Paravy, “Remarques sur les passages de saint Vincent Ferrier dans les vallées vaudoises (1399-1403)”, *Croyances religieuses et société alpine* (Bulletin de la société d’études des Hautes Alpes, 1985-86), p. 155.

Vincent Ferrer was not the only Dominican preacher obsessed with the devil in the fifteenth century. The obsession with the devil by many mendicant preachers and/or inquisitors is demonstrated by the works they wrote promoting the existence of a conspiratorial sect of satanic witches. Johannes Nider's *Formicarius*, Nicolas Jacquier's *Flagellum maleficorum*, Jean Vinet's *Flagellum hereticorum fascinariorum*, and Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus maleficarum* were all demonological works authored by Dominican friars and inquisitors in the fifteenth century. The Franciscan friar Pontus Fougeyron was probably the author of the *Errores gazariorum*, which demonstrates a serious concern with the threat of a demonic conspiracy. The sermons of the Franciscan preacher Bernardino of Siena described satanic rituals. Fougeyron's work and Bernardino's sermons added to the dissemination of notions related to demonism. As Walter Stephens has argued, apart from Nider, their efforts to circumvent the canon *Episcopi* in order to establish the physical reality of demons through copulation with witches were motivated by their anxiety, anguish and desire to confirm the reality of the spiritual world as promised by scripture.⁴ In turn, this confirmed the divine efficacy of all the sacraments of the Catholic Church and the religious truth of its doctrines.

The debate over the reality of demonic agency was central to the internal politics of the Church. Nider, Jacquier, and Fougeyron were prelates at the Council of Basel (1431-1440) along with others who authored works of demonology. These friars were pro-conciliarists. Jacquier voted to depose Eugenius IV in favour of antipope Felix V, all in accordance with the council's decision to reform the Church and defer its authority to councils. The informal exchanges between these clergymen at the Council of Basel

⁴ Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 35.

ensured the dissemination of the beliefs tied to the existence of a sect of demonic witches.⁵ The ensuing political and religious conflicts between the conciliarists and those who supported the authority of the pope were expressed in eschatological and demonological terminology. Eugenius IV accused antipope Felix V of being the Antichrist and they mutually accused each other of demonic corruption. Eugenius IV then began instructing inquisitors to begin pursuing demonic sorcerers and witches more aggressively, probably to divert the focus away from the conciliarist issue. The pursuit of devil worshippers and invokers of demons confirmed Eugenius's orthodoxy, that he was on the side of God, solidifying his authority in spite of conciliarist demands.

Similarly, preaching sermons against devil worshippers allowed the Italian Franciscan preacher Bernardino of Siena to deflect accusations of heresy.⁶ His dramatic and theatrical 'performances' during his sermons using the monogram 'IHS' alarmed some members of the Church. In 1426, he was accused of idolatry and heresy for the use of the monogram of the cult of Jesus. He defended himself against these accusations well enough that he was asked to stay in Rome and deliver 100 sermons.⁷

Until that time, Bernardino already had a reputation of preaching against heretics, Jews and sodomites. The demonic practices he associated in his sermons with Waldensian heretics present in Piedmont were transferred to devil worshipping witches. After his own brush with the inquisition, he delivered a sermon in Siena in 1427 alleging that Waldensian heretics made powders out of unbaptized children in order to make a

⁵ Michael D. Bailey and Edward Peters, "A Sabbat of Demonologists: Basel, 1431-1440", *The Historian*, vol. 65, no. 6 (Winter 2003), pp. 1375-1395.

⁶ Gary K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), p. 39.

⁷ Franco Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 105.

beverage that prevented the person who drank it from revealing the secrets of their sect. This same allegation had been used since the eleventh century to demonize Manichean heretics.⁸ In another sermon, Bernardino claimed that during his time in Rome, he had exposed a witch who had murdered her son and made powders and unguents out of him that she used to transform herself into a cat. A very similar account is later found in Nider's *Formicarius*. The judge Peter had informed Nider that a woman accused of witchcraft in Bern had confessed that members of her sect practiced the cannibalism of children and made powders and liquids out of them that they use in their satanic ceremonies.⁹

The similarities in these accounts is striking. They are revealing of how practices that were historically used to demonize medieval heretics were transferred to devil worshipping witches through the public sermons delivered by mendicant preachers in the fifteenth century. Finding a similar practice in a confession extracted in a witch trial in Bern begs the question of whether Bernardino originated this allegation.¹⁰ Nider's use of this confession as evidence to support the existence of a sect of demonic witches shows how the satanic practices described in confessions of witchcraft constituted a source of knowledge that helped demonologists to define what to believe about satanic witchcraft.¹¹ Since the *Formicarius* was a manual designed for pastoral work, this

⁸ N. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), p. 131; Carlo Ginzburg, *Le sabbat des sorcières* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 86.

⁹ Catherine Chène, "Jean Nider: *Formicarius*", Martine Ostorero, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, Kathrin Utz Tremp (eds.), *L'imaginaire du sabbat: édition critique des textes les plus anciens (1430 c. - 1440 c.)* (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 1999), p. 155.

¹⁰ Chène, "Jean Nider: *Formicarius*", p. 241.

¹¹ Virginia Krause, *Witchcraft, Demonology, and Confession in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 45.

exemplum could be used in subsequent sermons creating a kind of feedback effect that triggered the cycle of dissemination to begin all over again.

Delivering public sermons against the reality of satanic witchcraft, however, made such a preacher vulnerable to be themselves accused of devil worship. The case of Guillaume Adeline shows that questions of Church politics – personal conflicts, conciliarism and orthodoxy – could all be expressed in demonological terminology. The sermons Adeline allegedly preached against the reality of the witches’ sabbath in 1438 led him to be condemned as a devil worshipping witch in 1453. Leading up to his accusation, he had been in a conflict with the lord of Clairvaux over church revenues and he openly opposed the position of conciliarists by supporting the authority of the pope in matters of Church policies.¹² Significantly, he was made to confess that the devil had ordered him to preach that the witches’ sabbath was a delusion in order to better corrupt ‘unaware’ Christians.¹³ Adeline’s condemnation allowed the authorities to discredit such heretical discourse as well as his anti-conciliarism, all the while confirming that there really was a demonic conspiracy actively working in secret to destroy Christianity. This notion constituted the core argument of Nicolas Jacquier and Pierre Mamoris in their demonologies, using the case of Adeline to argue that the canon *Episcopi* was not applicable to the newly discovered underground sect of devil worshippers.

Adeline’s case was discussed by chroniclers, demonologists and preachers who recounted his tale in support of the existence of satanic witchcraft. The author of the

¹² Martine Ostorero, *Le diable au sabbat: Littérature démonologique et sorcellerie (1440-1460)* (Florence: Sismel, 2011), p. 656.

¹³ Maxwell- Stuart, “Guillaume Adeline” in *Witch Beliefs and Witch Trials in the Middle Ages, Documents and Readings*, p. 150.

Recollectio, probably written by Jacques du Bois, discussed this case in the context of the witch hunt of Arras in 1460.¹⁴ Adeline's case is described in generic terms without providing the specific context of his trial, but showed how an ordained preacher could become corrupted by the devil. The witches in the trials of Arras were called 'Vaudois' as shown by the title of the *Recollectio casus, status et condicionis Valdensium ydolatrarum* (*Recollection of the case, of the state of the Vaudois idolaters*).¹⁵ The Waldensian heresy and the conspiracy of devil worshippers continued to be associated in religious discourse in the fifteenth century. The public sermons delivered during the Arras trials by the Dominican Pierre le Broussard described the witches' sabbath as "when they go to their *vaudrie* gatherings". Broussard's sermons described the profane and sexually perverted rituals performed at the sabbath with an emphasis on the desecration of the sacraments: "In their assemblies the devil preached and defended them from going to church, to hear the mass and to take holy water; and if they took some to show they were Christians, that they say 'may this not displease my master', and that they do not go to confession".¹⁶ Waldensians had been demonized since the twelfth century for exactly these reasons.

Heresy was associated with the devil and through the persecution of witchcraft, religious authorities, especially Dominican preachers and inquisitors, were able to confirm the reality of demonic agency. For Wolfgang Behringer, the spiritual and

¹⁴ Frank Mercier, *La Vaudrie d'Arras*, pp. 31-34.

¹⁵ Andrew Colin Gow, Robert B. Desjardins, and François V. Pageau, *The Arras Witch Treatises: Johannes Tinctor's Invectives contre la secte de vauderie and the Recollectio casus, status et condicionis Valdensium ydolatrarum by the Anonymous of Arras (1460)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

¹⁶ Jacques du Clercq, *Mémoires de J. Du Clercq*, vol. 3, Book IV, chapter 4 (Paris: Lacrosse, 1823), pp. 21-22.

mystical practices of Waldensians were confused with the magical practices of witches and vice versa. However, Kathrin Utz Tremp's analysis has shown that the authorities made clear distinctions between the 'imagined' sect of witches and 'real' Waldensian heretics. The accused in the trials of Arras were clearly witches, but the demonizing model involving the Waldensians' rejection of Catholic sacraments could be transposed onto devil worshipping witches. The Dominican inquisitor Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) has been singled out as establishing the enduring gendered distinction between 'male' heretics and 'female' witches as variations of the same demonic conspiracy.¹⁷ Tamar Herzig has shown that the contemporary perception of a gendered division between the two types of heretics, religious dissenters (men) and witches (women) can be traced back to Kramer's *Malleus* at the end of the fifteenth century. Therefore, by 1500 the image of a sect of satanic witches mainly composed of women was established in elite discourse and other works of demonology. While popular culture was more concerned with the threat of the witches' harmful magic, ordinary people seem to have been convinced by the preachers' message of diabolical dangers in their communities, especially in times of crisis. While large scale witch trials had calmed down by the turn of the century, they were reignited on an even larger scale through a confluence of community disasters and a new campaign of demonizing propaganda on the part of preachers.

The religious conflicts provoked by the Reformation in the sixteenth century turned the attention away from demonic witches until c. 1560, when witch trials began to occur more frequently. Instead, French Catholic preachers focused their demonizing

¹⁷ Herzig, "Flies, Heretics and the Gendering of Witchcraft", p. 67.

rhetoric towards demonic Protestants. In his entry on “Fear” in the *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, William Naphy warns us that seeing apocalypticism and the fear of divine retribution as defining features of the early modern period “would be as misleading as using tabloids and conspiracy theories to characterize the modern age”.¹⁸ It is true that most people during the sixteenth century were preoccupied with many other more immediate concerns involving their daily lives. However, the manifestations of extreme violence performed by Catholics against their perceived religious antagonists – the Huguenots – were expressions of deep religious anxieties concerning their salvation and God’s judgement. Catholic preachers such as François Le Picart had cultivated the fear of the apocalypse and of Judgement Day in the decades leading up to the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598). Le Picart told his audiences that Protestant heresy was the religion of the devil and that if France fell into heresy God would destroy the kingdom and everyone in it. He formulated his argument against heresy as a systematic defence of Catholic sacraments against Protestant attacks, especially those directed against clerical powers over sacramental absolution and the ‘real’ presence in the Eucharist. According to Le Picart, these attacks “all proceed from the devil of hell”.¹⁹ This line of argument followed the demonizing rhetoric found in fifteenth-century sermons by Vincent Ferrer and Bernardino of Siena. Ferrer predicted the apocalypse on a daily basis in his sermons and Bernardino played on the fears of heretics of his audience in order to demonize witches.

¹⁸ William G. Naphy, “Fear” in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, (Santa Barbara: ABC Clio, 2007), p. 354.

¹⁹ Le Picart, *Les sermons et instructions chrestiennes pour tous les jours de l'advent*, vol. 2, p. 239.

A few years after the death of Le Picart in 1556, the religious wars broke out in 1562. A few violent events had broken the peace before the religious factions confronted each other in armed conflicts. In 1562, the Duke of Guise and his men massacred a number of French Calvinists – Huguenots – in the town of Vassy. The same year, the Huguenot population in the city of Sens were all massacred by its Catholic inhabitants. The vicious massacres were committed in response to the defiance of royal edicts prohibiting Protestants from practicing their faith within towns and cities and armed insurrections committed by the Huguenots in many major cities throughout the kingdom. The Huguenots destroyed churches, the relics of saints, and holy objects – iconoclasm – in celebration of their victories. These acts of desecration were viewed by Catholics as open acts of hostility towards God and as acts of treason towards the sovereign.

Prior to the riot in Toulouse in 1562, the Franciscan preacher Melchior de Flavin was delivering sermons associating Protestants with the devil and saying that the toleration of heresy would bring down God’s judgement. During one of his sermons, Flavin was almost killed when a riot broke out because a man suspected to be a Huguenot was ignoring the preacher’s sermon. These reactions reflect the powerful influence preachers had over their audiences.²⁰ When the Huguenots failed to take the city in an armed coup in Toulouse, they were severely persecuted by the court of the parlement. In the context of the confessional conflicts, the witch hunt in nearby Couserans was a pre-emptive religious cleansing of its internal deviants. In their judgements of the appellants, the judges of the Parlement of Toulouse ordered the

²⁰ Megan Armstrong, *Politics of Piety: Franciscan Preachers During the Wars of Religion, 1560-1600* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2004), p. 25.

bishop of Couserans to send “competent and sufficient preachers neither suspected in the faith or Christian religion to preach and instruct the people within his diocese”.²¹ The sentences passed by the *parlementaires* of Toulouse show how the royal judges associated heresy and witchcraft with political treason.

Meanwhile, in the early years of the wars during the 1560s, the Catholic clergy was working to discredit Huguenot teachings through sermons and propaganda, such as the demonizing pamphlets of Artus Désiré who often quoted preachers like Le Picart.²² In 1566, the Dominican friar Pierre de la Motte instrumentalized the young Nicole Obry’s demonic possession in order to demonstrate the demonic nature of French Calvinists. The Catholic rituals during Obry’s exorcism heavily relied on the use the divine power of the Eucharist. The ‘Real Presence’ of the body of Christ within the Host was the result of transubstantiation during the Mass, a doctrine rejected by Protestants. Obry’s possession allowed the devil to speak to the audience in a dramatic ‘live sermon’ and prove ‘in person’ both how heresy was demonic and how Catholic rituals were divine.²³ The dramatic performances of Obry’s demon during repeated public exorcisms in front of large crowds that made strategic use of the consecrated Host constituted the visual and tangible evidence that Catholic priests were invested with the divine power of God to perform the sacraments of the Church and that the Huguenots were in league with the devil. This powerful ‘mise en scene’ allowed the members of the audience to

²¹ ADHG, B, Parlement de Toulouse, Arrêts criminels, reg 85, printed in Jean-François Le Nail, “Procédure contre des sorcières de Seix en 1562”, *Bulletin de la société ariégeoise des sciences, lettres et arts*, vol. 31, (1976), p. 183.

²² Artus Désiré, *Les regrets et complaintes de Passe partout et Bruitcourt sur la mémoire renouvelée du trépas et bout de l’an de feu très noble et vénérable personne Maistre François Picart (...)* (Paris: 1556).

²³ Jean Boulaese, *Le manuel de l’admirable victoire du corps de Dieu sur l’esprit maling Beelzebub obtenue à Laon 1566* (Paris: 1588), p. 86.

participate in an otherwise private ritual that made tangible and accessible a theological doctrine that seemed remote when explained in a traditional sermon. The reality of the doctrine of transubstantiation was a central argument made in elite theological discourse to show how the heretics' and witches' attacks on the sacraments proved that they were in league with the devil. Catholic propaganda using live exorcisms visually confirmed what preachers had been saying and was an alternative means to combat Protestant heretics outside of armed conflicts.

The political aspect of the civil war influenced the demonizing rhetoric of Catholic preachers, such as Simon Vigor who delivered sermons in the French capital in the 1560s and 1570s telling his audience that Protestants were the “ministers of Satan” and called for their literal extermination in the face of God’s Judgement. His “radical” sermons against the royal policies of appeasement brought him in front of the judges of the Parlement of Paris where he had to convince them that he was not seeking to provoke ‘sedition’.²⁴ All of this demonizing rhetoric fed existing feelings of religious guilt and anguish, what Robert Scribner calls “apocalyptic angst”²⁵ and what Denis Crouzet defines as a “feeling of eschatological punishment”.²⁶ After learning of the assassination of the Huguenot leadership in Paris the night of August 22, 1572, the next day the Catholic population viciously massacred the Huguenots living in the city on the day of St. Bartholomew. Exterminating demonic Huguenots during the French

²⁴ Diefendorf, “Simon Vigor, A Radical Preacher in Sixteenth Century Paris”, p. 405.

²⁵ Robert Scribner, “Anticlericalism and the Cities” in Peter A Dykeman and Heiko Oberman (eds.), *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 153.

²⁶ Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-vers 1610)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seyssel, 1990), tome 2, p. 93.

Reformation accomplished a similar feeling of being freed from demonic forces as burning demonic witches had done in the fifteenth century.

Late medieval and early modern sermons concerning the devil constitute a bridge between elite demonological notions and the religious and magical beliefs held by popular culture. By analysing how religious discourse was structured to be disseminated to a popular, mostly illiterate audience, this thesis shows how ordinary believers were consistently subjected to a demonizing discourse aimed at structuring their understanding of Christianity. In their sermons, Catholic preachers associated heresy and magic with the devil in order to define the forbidden boundaries not to be crossed by Christians who wished to reach salvation. Describing in demonological terminology the negative inversion of Christian teachings helped to define what correct Christians beliefs and behaviours were supposed to be followed.²⁷ In addition, the periodization of this thesis shows how there was considerable continuity in the strategy to suppress heresy and witchcraft from the late medieval period into the early modern period.²⁸ Sixteenth-century Catholic preachers refined a strategy of demonizing the ‘other’ previously established against medieval heretics and witches. The larger scale of the religious conflicts provoked by the Reformation helps to explain the expansion of the beliefs associated with a widespread demonic conspiracy of heretics and witches and the multiplication of treatises insisting on the reality of cult devoted to Satan that was working to destroy Christianity. In many ways, the Reformation was a continuation of

²⁷ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 80.

²⁸ Nicholas Terpstra, *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 39.

the conciliarist agenda to reform the Church in the fifteenth century.²⁹ The reformers who called into question the authority of the Church during both the conciliarist conflict and the Reformation were painted as worshippers of Satan and vice-versa. In both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the conflicts over religious and institutional reforms were defined using eschatological terminology.³⁰

What remains to be investigated is how much of the theological and demonological notions ordinary people really absorbed and understood from hearing sermons. As Gerald Strauss has pointed out, it is clear that there could be disparities between what the preacher said and what the audience understood.³¹ In the fifteenth century, ordinary Catholics were not usually as enthusiastic to pursue peaceful Waldensian neighbours as they were in eliminating harmful witches from their communities. There is evidence that anti-Waldensian sermons were understood to refer to harmful witches. However, in the sixteenth century, French Calvinists became associated with civil unrest, popular riots and the flagrant destruction of religious icons and places of worship. These acts of desecration could be easily reconciled with Catholic sermons promoting the notion that the Huguenots were the “ministers of Satan”. However, the problem concerning the lack of sources originating from ordinary people expressing their religious beliefs remains an obstacle for the historian. The role of ‘group psychology’ seems to be an important factor, especially when there was a perceived threat to the collective religious identity of

²⁹ Mark Greengrass, *Christendom Destroyed: Europe 1517-1648* (London: Penguin, 2014), p. 259.

³⁰ Frances Courtney Kneupper, “Conciliarist Employment of Eschatology during and after the Council of Basel (1431-1460)” in Mathieu Caesar (ed.), *Factional Struggles: Divided Elites in European Cities & Courts (1400-1750)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 68.

³¹ Gerald Strauss, “Success and Failure in the German Reformation”, *Past & Present*, no. 67 (May, 1975), p. 51. Peter Burke makes a similar observation concerning the potential disparity between the intended religious message of the preacher and the way it was received by a popular audience. See *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p. 106.

the members of the community. Once religious and social threats were perceived, community identities were strengthened, and its members were compelled to eradicate these threats by preachers who proclaimed it as God's will. What is certain is the role of the threatening element posed by religious antagonists. Accusations of witchcraft were sustained through perceived acts of magical harm and destruction viewed through the lens of social conflicts. The religious massacres of heretics followed verbal altercations in which Calvinists insulted fundamental Catholic beliefs and practices and especially Calvinist acts of open rebellion during which they desecrated Catholic places of worship. Catholic preachers instructed their audiences to understand these events, prevalent misfortunes, civil insurrections and religious desecrations, as the work of the devil.

Sermons, especially those delivered by Dominican and Franciscan preachers in the fifteenth and Dominican and Jesuit preachers in the sixteenth century, articulated the vocabulary of confessional conflicts, religious persecution and violence in terms of a battle between God and the devil. Their demonizing discourse structured the consciousness of guilt in their audiences by guiding their actions against the enemies of the Catholic Church, the enemies of God, Satan and his minions – heretics and witches. The cultural transmissions of learned religious ideas about the devil, heretics and witches between preachers and ordinary people resonated with the popular understanding of magic, misfortunes and the threat posed by social and religious deviants. Mendicant preachers actively shaped the actions of people who came to hear them, especially during times of intense confessional conflicts. The evidence of the witch trials as well as the persecution and the violence directed towards heretics in the

fifteenth and sixteenth centuries shows that people carefully listened to and internalized their message about the devil's conspiratorial plans to cause them to suffer during their lives and to bring about the eternal damnation of their souls in the afterlife.

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Moncton, NB.
- 2022 **PhD. History**
University of New Brunswick
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EXPERIENCE

- Winter 2020 **Instructor**
Hist. 1800 – Introduction to the
Middle Ages
Université de Moncton,
département d’histoire.
- 2016 – 2017 **Research assistant**
Dr. Edith Snook, UNB, Fredericton,
Department of English.
- 2014 – 2016 **Research assistant**
Dr. Robin Vose, STU, Fredericton,
Department of History.
- Winter 2014 **Instructor**
Hist. 4001 - Heretics & Witches in
Europe, University of New
Brunswick, Department of History.
- Fall 2013 **Instructor**
Hist. 3210 – Les procès de
sorcellerie à l’époque moderne,

Université de Moncton,
département d'histoire.

2012 – 2013

CACHET – Project Coordinator

Dr. Erin Morton
University of New Brunswick
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Sept. 2010 – April 2011

Research Assistant

Dr. Gary K Waite, Oxford
Bibliographies Online
University of New Brunswick
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Sept. 2009 – April 2013

Teaching Assistant

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Research Assistant

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Conference Papers

- “Demonology and the Bible in the sixteenth century: From scepticism to belief concerning the reality of witchcraft” | The 6th Annual McGill-Queen’s Graduate Student Conference in History, Queen’s, Ontario, March 13 – 14 2009.
- “La philosophie naturelle, la magie diabolique et le doute : la remise en cause de la sorcellerie au XVIe siècle en Europe” | Le 20e Concours des jeunes chercheurs et chercheurs de la FESR, Moncton, New Brunswick, March 3 2009.
- “Jacques Fournier and the Inquisition of Pamiers (1318-1325): Interrogations and the Perils of Confessing” | University of Maine-University of New Brunswick International Graduate Student Conference, Orono, Maine, October 1 – 3 2010.
- “Rebellion and Sedition: Religious Uprisings in Toulouse in 1562 and the Witch Hunt in the Diocese of Cousérans” | Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies at

the Canadian Congress for the Humanities and Social Science, Fredericton, New Brunswick, May 28 – June 4, 2011.

- “Clerical Culture and Reform: The Repression of Witchcraft in Fifteenth Century Dauphiné” | University of Maine – University of New Brunswick International Graduate Student Conference, Fredericton, New Brunswick, October 14 – 16, 2011.
- “Preaching Against Heresy: Witchcraft Persecutions in Toulouse in 1562” | International Conference: Science and the Occult - from Antiquity through the Early Modern Period, Purdue University, IN, April 20, 2012.
- “The Origins of the Witch Hunts in the Fifteenth Century”, AMEMG Conference, UPEI, Oct 2013.
- “*Preaching Against the Witches’ Sabbath: Demonological debates in the Fifteenth Century and the case of Guillaume Adeline*”, AMEMG Conference, St. FX University, Aug, 2015.

Publications

- Waite, Gary K., Baccouche, A. Karim, Peterman, Cheryl. (editors), *Oxford Bibliographies Online*, “Witchcraft”, 2013-.
<http://www.oup.com/online/us/obo/?view=usa>