

NICOLAS CHESNEAU, CATHOLIC PRINTER IN PARIS DURING THE FRENCH WARS OF RELIGION*

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ABSTRACT. *This article explores the activities of Nicolas Chesneau, a Parisian printer active between the beginning of the French Wars of Religion and the League. While printing in the Protestant sphere has received a great deal of historiographical attention, the influence of Catholic printing on opinion forming during the French Wars of Religion remains comparatively misunderstood. Nicolas Chesneau was a militant Catholic printer whose activity responded to commercial and political pressures but also reflects a personal commitment to Catholicism. Evidence drawn from Chesneau's epistles and bibliography reveals personal relationships with authors, other printers, and patrons. Chesneau's production answered growing demand for news and religious instruction for the laity, a phenomenon that is only beginning to be understood. Analysis of his output reveals the influence of the cardinal de Lorraine who was determined to use the vernacular book to pursue his agenda of reform, often in the face of institutional opposition from the crown, the parlement, and the University of Paris. The end of Nicolas Chesneau's career is marked by a shift towards expensive in-folio books that proved to be less profitable than the short in-octavo works that distinguishes his production during the first decade of the French Wars of Religion.*

When one thinks of the Reformation and the book, one has seldom Catholicism in mind: the assumption that Protestantism alone benefited from the printed word has long persisted in the historiography.¹ The publication of the *French vernacular books*, the bibliography of all books printed in French in the sixteenth century, will do much to dispel this assumption.² The promotion of Catholicism in print is no longer a phenomenon that can be ignored and constitutes as much a

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¹ Jean François Gilmont and Karin Maag, *The Reformation and the book* (Aldershot, 1998).

² Andrew Pettegree, Malcolm Walsby, and Alexander Wilkinson, eds., *French vernacular books: books published in the French language before 1601* (Leiden, 2007) (hereafter *FB*).

literature of protest as Protestant books. Aside from Denis Pallier's pioneering study of Parisian printing during the League, 1585–94, the involvement of printers in the Catholic Reformation remains virtually unknown.³ The militant Catholicism that took expression in the League has its origins in the first two decades of the religious wars, notably in the workshop of important Parisian printers such as Nicolas Chesneau (1533–84) active between 1558 and 1584.

Historians have now acknowledged the role that printed books played in disseminating radical Catholicism and in encouraging violence but the economic context in which this took place is poorly understood.⁴ Catholic preachers and authors of pamphlets were often accused of being firebrands that aggravated tensions but one often forgets that books were also commodities that responded to the market. Printers played a crucial role as intermediaries between authors and readers and as economic agents they responded to demand as well as personal and political imperatives. Chesneau was a printer that specialized in short in-octavo books that became the hallmark of the French Wars of Religion, 1562–98, and his career is a good illustration of the variety of pressures that informed printers' economic activity. Radical Catholic books contravened the royal policy of conciliation and benefited in this respect from the collusion of intransigent patrons and institutions, notably the *parlement* of Paris.

Chesneau's origins are obscure; we know that he was born in the town of Cheffes in Anjou on 30 January 1533 and that he established himself in Paris in 1556; he should be distinguished from his namesake who was canon of Reims.⁵ Philippe Renouard indicates that Chesneau worked in the first instance for Claude Frémy from 1556 but the first book bearing his name is a small in-16o dated 1558. This was a anti-Protestant treatise by the intransigent dean of the University of Toulouse, Esprit Rotier, and set the tone for the rest of Chesneau's production for these years: *Antidotz et regimes contre la peste d'heresie*.⁶ Chesneau was most probably Frémy's chief *compagnon* and ran one of his presses in the first instance before establishing himself as *imprimeur-libraire* which required considerable capital and patronage.⁷

The first title to bear Chesneau's device as a master printer was Antoine Du Val's *Mirouer des Calvinistes* in 1559 when his business was still housed at Frémy's address.⁸ When Chesneau acquired his own *enseigne* in the nearby rue St Jacques he had become a bookseller of the University of Paris which guaranteed him a steady income. He published many works by doctors of the Faculty of Theology

³ Denis Pallier, *Recherches sur l'imprimerie à Paris pendant la Ligue, 1585–1594* (Geneva, 1975).

⁴ Luc Racaute, *Hatred in print: Catholic propaganda and Protestant identity during the French Wars of Religion* (Aldershot, 2002).

⁵ Michel Simonin, *Vivre de sa plume au XVI^e siècle ou la carrière de François de Belleforest* (Geneva, 1992), p. 111; Alain Tallon, *La France et le Concile de Trente, 1518–1563* (Paris, 1997), p. 489 n. 125; Larissa Taylor, *Heresy and orthodoxy in sixteenth-century Paris: François Le Picart and the beginnings of the Catholic Reformation* (Leiden, 1999).

⁶ *FB* 46737: Esprit Rotier, *Antidotz et regimes contre la peste d'heresie* (Paris, 1558).

⁷ Pallier, *Recherches sur l'imprimerie*, p. 5.

⁸ *FB* 17803–4: Antoine Du Val, *Mirouer des Calvinistes et Armure des Chrestiens* (Paris, 1559).

that confirmed his standing with the Catholic establishment. Nonetheless Chesneau was a product of his time and his career benefited from the emergence of a new market for short in-octavo works in the vernacular. Unlike printers of the previous generation, Chesneau was able to build his business by producing five times as many books in the vernacular as he did in Latin. Like his predecessors, however, Chesneau had received a Christian humanist education and like most *compagnons* had gone on a European tour before starting his activity.⁹ His education is reflected in his knowledge of Scripture and classical literature and his commitment to the Republic of Letters is denoted by his choice of device.

Booksellers' shops were hung with signs that made them easily recognizable in a street where the business was concentrated in the Latin Quarter near the University of Paris. Chesneau chose the device of Johannes Frobenius who had been Erasmus's printer in Basel, which reflected his commitment to humanism and marked him as a printer with considerable ambition.¹⁰ Frobenius's device represents two coiled snakes around a staff symbolizing concord to which Chesneau added an oak tree as an allusion to his surname (*chêne*: Chesneau).¹¹ The complete device features an oak tree with a coiled snake around its trunk with five arrows clutched in its tail with an adjoining banner bearing the motto *Concordia vis nescia vinci*: 'concord is a force that cannot be broken'. Given Chesneau's specialization in anti-Protestant polemic, the snake clearly represented the poison of heresy, while the unbreakable five arrows and the oak tree figured steadfastness in the face of adversity. As we will see, Chesneau considered his books to be spiritual weapons in a cosmic war between the true faith and heresy.

In 1561 Chesneau produced a compilation, the *Contrarietez et contredits qui se trouvent en la doctrine de Jean Calvin*, edited by Du Val that summarizes his militant approach to the defence of Catholicism. This body of works comprised Du Val's translation of the anonymous *Demandes et repliques a Jean Calvin*; Gentian Hervet's translation of works by the Dutch bishop Wilhem Lindanus, including a catechism and a *Recueil d'aucunes mensonges de Calvin*; and finally Bontemps Léger's translation of Erasmus's *Response aux objections et poincts principaux de ceux qui se disent aujourdhuy vouloir reformer l'église*.¹² Until that point few Catholic pamphlets had dared advertise as many stars of the Protestant Reformation in the title-page (Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, and Martin Bucer) or so openly discuss their respective divergence of opinion.¹³

Du Val's *Demandes et repliques*, for instance, compared the 1545 and 1557 editions of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian religion* pointing to inconsistencies. Moreover this

⁹ Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *L'apparition du livre* (Paris, 1999), pp. 191–210.

¹⁰ Philippe Renouard, *Répertoire des Imprimeurs Parisiens* (Paris, 1965), pp. 80–1.

¹¹ *FB* 40570: Claude Paradin, *Devises héroïques* (Lyon, 1557), p. 185.

¹² *FB* 6469–70, 6472, 17803–14, 34754–66, 34770, 34774.

¹³ Francis Higman, 'Premières réponses catholiques aux écrits de la Réforme, 1525–1540', in Francis Higman, ed., *Lire et découvrir: la circulation des idées au temps de la Réforme* (Geneva, 1998), pp. 497–514.

corpus of texts is exceptional in employing techniques to facilitate the understanding of complex theological points by the unlearned. Lindanus's *Recueil d'aucunes mensonges* pointed to internal disagreement within Protestantism by means of a visual device that placed differing theological propositions side by side on the page. Theological points such as 'Christ's body is not present in the Eucharist' are listed in columns featuring the respective Protestant propositions in between brackets with the Catholic 'correct' opinion on the right hand side of the page. The result is a table featuring all the variations of a given theological point on a single page that could be compared with one another; in the very words of the editors they could be: 'pointed out and seen with the eye'.¹⁴

The works included in the *Contrarietez* could be sold separately or sown together with a covering title-page listing the titles of the shorter works inside. A manuscript table of contents written on the binding of a collection of anti-Protestant treatises found in a volume kept at the Bibliothèque nationale indicates that this was common practice.¹⁵ This idiosyncrasy was systematized in the *Contrarietez* allowing Chesneau to gauge the market and drop unsuccessful titles, a low-risk strategy that gave his business a quick return on investment. The works included in the *Contrarietez* have survived as a compilation or by themselves with separate title pages. The price, the tone, and even the font used made these works accessible to a lay readership: the number of surviving copies suggests that Chesneau had cornered a successful new market: short in-octavo pamphlets became the privileged medium for disseminating news during this period.

The fact that some of these works were translations from Dutch authors has attracted the attention of Judith Pollman who remarked that the French demonstrated a willingness to respond to Calvinism through vernacular books that was not matched in the Low Countries.¹⁶ Chesneau's career is a good illustration of this phenomenon representing a new militant kind of *imprimeurs-libraires* who, along with the authors they published, defied the royal policy of conciliation, an attitude that became one of the marks of militant Catholicism in France. Indeed, the authors printed by Chesneau increasingly protested against what was perceived to be pressure at court to have Protestantism legally recognized in the kingdom. Chesneau's career was fuelled by literate laymen's anxiety and thirst for information and contributed to the growing public debate about religion.¹⁷

Although Chesneau produced other titles in 1561, the *Contrarietez* or its component parts were reprinted in subsequent years and short in-octavo works make up the bulk of his production throughout the 1560s. The commissioning of a new

¹⁴ 'cognoistre au doigt et voir à l'oeil'. *FB* 34762: Antoine Du Val, *Les contrarietez et contredicts, qui se trouvent en la doctrine de Jean Calvin, de Luter & autres nouveaux evangelistes* (Paris, 1561), sigs. a2r, a5r.

¹⁵ *FB* 3445: René Benoist, *Clair Probation de la necessaire manducation de la substantielle & reale humanité de Jesus Christ* (Paris, 1564), Bibliothèque nationale class mark D-21840.

¹⁶ Judith Pollmann, 'Countering the Reformation in France and the Netherlands: clerical leadership and Catholic violence 1560–1585', *Past and Present*, 190 (2006), pp. 83–120.

¹⁷ Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the cross: Catholics and Huguenots in sixteenth-century Paris* (New York, NY, 1991).

more elaborate device in 1561 is a measure of Chesneau's success: copper plates bearing illustrations were the most expensive single items of a printer's set of type. Moreover, the variations between different issues of the same works printed in 1561 indicate that Chesneau operated at least two presses only two years after starting business which is a remarkable sign of success.¹⁸ Examples include René des Freuz's *Brieve response aux quatre execrables articles* and Chales Choquart's *Epistre à monsieur de Montpensier* that have survived in two or more forms.¹⁹ From 1567 onwards works were produced in a second contiguous workshop that Chesneau had acquired in rue St Jacques.²⁰

Chesneau's success was carried on the wave of what Andrew Pettegree has called a 'pamphlet moment' very similar to the explosion of vernacular literature that marked the advent of Lutheranism in the Empire.²¹ Unlike the Empire, however, printing in France was concentrated in large towns where the presence of a *noblesse de robe* guaranteed a captive audience. But the second half of the sixteenth century saw an explosion in the number of vernacular books that suggests that a wider proportion of the literate population acquired books. Distribution of surviving copies of Chesneau's work issued in different forms demonstrates that successful books were subsequently re-printed to answer demand. The subject matter of these books indicates that there was consumer pressure to provide news of current events that printers were quick to seize up as a commercial opportunity.

The diarist Claude Haton claimed that 15,000 people had waited outside the Louvres in the summer of 1561 for news of the deliberations that had taken place inside regarding matters of religion.²² Chesneau answered this demand by providing news of the Colloquy of Poissy in 1561 and the sending of a French delegation to the Council of Trent in 1562.²³ The speech of the French ambassadors at Trent has survived in a number of forms and employed yet another commercial strategy that involved printing title-pages in advance bearing the year that followed its first publication. Extant copies of the same form have survived bearing the imprint 1562 and 1563, suggesting to the buyer that the news contained in the pamphlet was up to date.²⁴ Chesneau continued to fulfil his role as news provider throughout the French Wars of Religion with an account of the siege of Poitiers in 1569 that praised the defence of the city by Henri, third duc de Guise.²⁵ Chesneau also covered the siege of Bourges in 1570 and La Rochelle in

¹⁸ Febvre and Martin, *L'apparition du livre*, pp. 191–210.

¹⁹ *FB* 15585–8: René des Freuz, *Brieve response aux quatre execrables articles contre la sainte messe* (Paris, 1561); *FB* 13070–3: Charles Choquart, *Epistre à monsieur de Montpensier* (Paris, 1561).

²⁰ MS, 'Renouard Alphabétique', Usuel Réserve Service C59 (6).

²¹ Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the culture of persuasion* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 177–84.

²² Laurent Bourquin, ed., *Mémoires de Claude Haton, 1: 1553–1565* (Paris, 2001), p. 180.

²³ *FB* 44317: Charles de Lorraine, *Confession catholique du saint sacrement de l'autel faite ... en l'assemblée de Poissy* (Paris, 1562).

²⁴ Charles Choquart, *La harangue des ambassadeurs du roy de France ... au Concile general de Trente* (Paris, 1562); *FB* 35042 is a different edition by Du Ferrier; Tallon, *La France et le Concile de Trente*, pp. 542 n. 81.

²⁵ *FB* 34552–3: Marin Liberge, *Ample discours de ce qui c'est fait et passe au siege de Poitiers* (Paris, 1569).

1573 in very short *plaquettes*, only a few pages long, a common format for delivering news.²⁶

Chesneau's commitment to the Catholic cause was more than commercial, however, and is revealed in an epistle in which he recounts his own experience of the beginning of the war. Having fled the plague to his native Anjou he was stopped by Protestant troops on the road back to Paris. This is related in a preface to an edition of François Le Picart's sermons, dated June 1563, where Chesneau explained why the completion of the collection had been delayed:

For my sins (I confess freely) after God had punished me, in taking from me what I loved most in the world ... fearing and fleeing the common danger of pestilence that pleased God the other year to visit upon Paris and throughout the kingdom, I was forced to retire to the country of Anjou, place of my birth, where I stayed more than I would have liked.²⁷

When the epidemic had passed and he wanted to return to Paris, he was delayed by Protestant troops who gave him the chase for over three hours before he could escape:

So that besides the said danger of plague, when I thought I would return to this town, other causes intervened that stopped me: the main one being the occupation of the roads by those who preach nothing in France but an *armed gospel*, a *gun-blazing Christ*, all blackened with *smoke* ... I was forced to hide from them for over three hours, and only after a long search, God favoured me so that with His help I was able to escape from their claws.²⁸

The passage in italics is taken from the court poet Pierre Ronsard's *Discours des misères de ce temps* that was dedicated to Catherine de' Medici whose conciliatory stance was largely blamed for the beginning of the wars. Ronsard was notorious for his opposition to the royal policy of conciliation, and Chesneau's homage is a clear indication of his own stance. After escaping from his pursuers Chesneau finally reached Paris in November 1562 to be enrolled for the defence of the city gates at Notre-Dame-des-Champs:

in the end I arrived safe and sound in this city of Paris, on Saturday 26 November when shortly after I arrived, around ten o'clock in the morning, I was forced on the spot, *to wield*

²⁶ FB 7072: An., *Discours de l'entreprise & conspiration, faicte par ceux de la nouvelle opinion, portans les armes cõtre le Roy, sur la ville de Bourges* (Paris, 1570); An., *Brief discours, sur ce qui c'est passé sur la mer pres la Rochelle* (Paris, 1573), unidentified in FB.

²⁷ 'Car pour mes pechez (je le confesse librement) apres que Dieu m'eut puny, en m'ostant la chose que plus en ce monde j'aymois ... craignant & fuyant le commun danger de pestilence, de laquelle il pleut à Dieu l'autre an nous visiter en ceste ville de Paris, & qu'asi par tout ce Royaume, contraincte fut me retirer au pais d'Anjou, lieu de ma naissance: ou sejourmay plus que je ne eusse bien voulu'. FB 33849: François Le Picart, *Les sermons, et instructions chrestiennes ... depuis la Trinité iusques à l'Aduent* (Paris, 1563), sigs. A2r–A3v.

²⁸ 'De sorte que outre ledit danger de peste, lors que je pensois retourner en ceste ville, autres causes surviendrent quilà m'arrestèrent: dont la principale fut, l'occupation des chemins par ceux qui ne preschent plus en France qu'une *evangile armée*, qu'un *Christ empistollé*, tout noircy de fumée ... Entre les abbois desquels apres esté trois heures ou plus acculé, non sans grandes inquisitions & recherches, Dieu me feit tant de faveur & grace, que par son ayde j'eschappay de leurs pattes.' Ibid., sigs. A2r–A3v.

weapons instead of books, and with the other citizens of this town, I did my duty in defending the gates, while a skirmish with the enemies of the Church of God was taking place outside the city walls, at Notre-Dame-des-Champs.²⁹

The expression in italics ‘to wield weapons instead of books’ is a precious indication of Chesneau’s militancy placing his trade on a par with military engagement against Protestantism. Another entry in Haton’s journal confirms that Condé had briefly camped outside Paris after the siege of Corbeil and had fired artillery shots and sent cavalry as far as the city gates.³⁰ It was indeed Chesneau’s duty as *librairie-juré* to defend the city walls in case of a siege, in compensation for certain privileges like exemption from paying tolls etc.³¹ But the expression suggests that he saw books as means to defend the Church and he encouraged other laymen to take up their skills as spiritual or corporeal weapons in the war against heresy: ‘Courage, do not despair for all that ... all good Christian needs to hold fast and like men resist these assaults without veering this way or that.’³²

With the Edict of January 1562 the crown had granted limited freedom of worship to Protestants and attempted to curb seditious preaching and printing from Catholic as well as Protestant authors and preachers.³³ Regulation of the book trade had been put in place at a time when there was consensus between the crown and the church regarding censorship of Protestant authors. The Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris had been given authority to issue *permissions* for religious books and the *parlement* of Paris was in charge of commercial privileges, giving them effective control of the printing industry. The *parlement* and the Sorbonne consistently opposed the so-called Edict of Toleration and subsequent Edicts of Pacification and were slow to censor books and preachers that defended the Catholic cause in the face of royal opposition.³⁴ This left printers such as Chesneau free to publish authors who explicitly attacked the royal policy of conciliation and proceeded to denigrate the Protestant adversary throughout the Wars of Religion.³⁵

²⁹ ‘a la fin me rendy sain & sauf en ceste ville de Paris, le samedi xxvi. jour de Novembre. Oū ne fus si tost arrivé, sur les dix heures du matin, qu’a l’instant force me fut, *au lieu des livres, manier les armes*, et avec les autres citiens de ceste ville, faire le devoir de garder les portes, pendant que l’escarmouche se donnoit par les ennemis de l’église de Dieu, hors les faulxbourgs nostre dame des champs’. *Ibid.*, sigs. A2r–A3v.

³⁰ Bourquin, ed., *Haton*, 1, p. 361.

³¹ Emile Pasquier, *Imprimeurs & libraires de l’Anjou* (Angers, 1932), p. 24.

³² ‘Courage, il ne se faut pour tout cecy desesperer ... tout bon Chrestien, doit tenir bon & virilement resister à ces assaultz sans s’esbranler ny ça n’y là’. *FB* 33849: Le Picart, *Les sermons ... depuis la Trinité jusques à l’Aduent*, sigs. A2r–A3v.

³³ Michel Simonin, *L’encre & la lumière: quarante-sept articles (1976–2000)* (Geneva, 2004), p. 327 n. 26; Bourquin, ed., *Haton*, 1, pp. 230–2, 407–8.

³⁴ Edouard de Barthélemy, ed., *Journal d’un curé Ligueur de Paris sous les trois derniers Valois* (Paris, 1866), pp. 41, 43; Frank S. Giese, *Artus Désiré: priest and pamphleteer of the sixteenth century* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1973), pp. 28–30.

³⁵ Geneviève Guilleminot-Chrétien, ‘Le contrôle de l’édition en France dans les années 1560: la genèse de l’édit de Moulins’, in P. Aquilon and H. J. Martin, eds., *Le livre dans l’Europe de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1988), pp. 378–85.

The champion of the Catholic cause was François (1519–63), second duc de Guise who had received a hero's welcome in Paris after the Massacre of Vassy that had sparked the first French War of Religion in March 1562. The duc de Guise was shot at the end of the first war in 1563 and leadership of the Catholic cause befell his brother Charles (1524–74), cardinal de Lorraine and archbishop of Reims. Although Lorraine had pursued concord with Protestants at the Colloquy of Poissy he all-heartedly opposed the crown's policy of conciliation and led the French delegation to the Council of Trent.³⁶ Thanks to Lorraine's protection theologians in his entourage were able to disregard with impunity the crown's ban on seditious libel that was reproduced in the Edict of Amboise of 1563.³⁷ For example Gentian Hervet and René Benoist were able personally to attack in print the Protestant ministers, Hugue Sureau du Rosier and Jean de l'Espine, who entered in dialogue with the Catholic theologians Simon Vigor and Claude de Saintes in 1566.³⁸

Tatiana Debbagi has pointed out that these *ad hominem* attacks went beyond religious disputation and contributed to the growing culture of violence that plagued the French Wars of Religion.³⁹ For instance, she quotes Hervet's defiant words printed in 1565: 'knowing full well what it is to contravene an Edict of pacification. My book is sold publicly and if I have caused offence let me be punished.'⁴⁰ Hervet (1499–84) was Lorraine's official theologian and canon of Reims, and Benoist (1521–1608) had been attached to the service of the Guise's niece, Mary Stuart, which afforded them the protection of the cardinal. Lorraine had set up the printing presses of Nicolas Bacquenois and Jean de Foigny in his archbishopric of Reims partly to circumvent censorship. Significantly Chesneau disseminated the works printed in Reims and collaborated with Lorraine on other projects with the collusion of sympathetic members of the *parlement* of Paris.⁴¹

Benoist, for instance, benefited from an authorial privilege by the *parlement* dated 1563 that allowed his works to be published by the printer of his choice

³⁶ Olivier Christin, *La paix de religion: l'autonomisation de la raison politique au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1997), p. 38–41.

³⁷ *FB* 3442: René Benoist, *Brieve et facile refutation d'un livret divulgue au nom de Jean de l'Espine* (Paris, 1564); *FB* 3449: René Benoist, *Epistre a Jean Calvin, dit ministre de Geneve, pour luy remonstrer qu'il repugne à la parole de Dieu* (Paris, 1564); *FB* 3455: René Benoist, *Seconde epistre a Jean Calvin, dict ministre de Geneve* (Paris, 1564); *FB* 28865: Gentian Hervet, *L'antihugues, c'est à dire, response aux escrits & blasphemes de Hugues Sureau* (Reims, 1567).

³⁸ Ariane Boltanski, *Les ducs de Nevers et l'État royal: genèse d'un compromis (ca 1550–ca 1600)* (Geneva, 2006), pp. 345–6.

³⁹ Tatiana Baranova Debbagi, 'Écrits diffamatoires et troubles civils: une culture politique dans la France des Guerres de Religion' (Ph.D. thesis, Paris IV Sorbonne, 2006); Stuart Carroll, *Blood and violence in early modern France* (Oxford, 2006).

⁴⁰ 'ne restant pas ignorant que c'est de contrevenir à un Edict de pacification. Mon livre se vent publiquement, si j'ay offensé, qu'on me punisse'. Debbagi, 'Écrits diffamatoires et troubles civils', pp. 164–70, at p. 168.

⁴¹ Denis Pallier, 'Les réponses catholiques', in Henri-Jean Martin, Roger Chartier and Jean-Pierre Vivet, eds., *Histoire de l'édition française* (Paris, 1983), pp. 327–47, at p. 337.

without the issuing of separate privileges for each work.⁴² Even if French Catholic theologians have not left the same resounding legacy as Protestant authors, they were nonetheless brand names for the wider French Catholic readership. Like modern publishers, *imprimeurs-libraires* competed over the exclusive rights to publish known and celebrated authors that offered commercial guarantees of a future income. Chesneau benefited largely from this measure, printing half of Benoit and Hervet's total output for the years in which he was in activity.⁴³ Another author that features prominently in Chesneau's vernacular output, Le Picart (1504–56) had taught at the Collège de Navarre where Lorraine and Benoit had both studied. Le Picart's had been banned from preaching by the crown but nonetheless enjoyed considerable popularity as testified by the large crowd that attended his funeral procession in 1556.⁴⁴

The complete edition of Le Picart's sermons represented Chesneau's most ambitious undertaking to date and he dedicated the editions to the cardinal's sister, Renée de Lorraine, abbess of St Pierre de Reims. Le Picart's sermons had been printed partially by Bacquenois in Reims, but Chesneau published them systematically in four volumes.⁴⁵ Benoit's preface to one of these volumes offers some useful indication of Chesneau's personal participation in the preparation of the text and refers to: 'the familiar friendship that has long been reciprocal' between the two men:

Chesneau (who graciously has books printed that he knows are profitable and necessary for the Christian Republic, has nothing printed lightly or without due deference) through whose diligence we owe these present sermons to have been sought, reviewed, corrected and printed, was enough confirmation that these sermons were indeed by [Le Picart].⁴⁶

After the death of the duc de Guise in 1563, Chesneau's production was almost exclusively devoted to him or his brother, either through orations for the duke's funeral or news of the Council of Trent. Although this may have been spurred by purely commercial imperatives, Chesneau's connection with the Guise is hinted at in a third device that starts featuring on his books from 1563. The cross of Anjou-Lorraine appeared above the printer's initials 'NC' and points to Chesneau's birthplace but also to the house of Lorraine who had been dukes of Anjou in the fifteenth century. Although perhaps no more than obsequiousness

⁴² Vladimir Angelo, *Les curés de Paris au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 2005), p. 643.

⁴³ Benoit: *FB* 3418–645; Hervet: *FB* 28822–65. ⁴⁴ Bourquin, ed., *Haton*, 1, p. 123.

⁴⁵ *FB* 33840–3, 33850, 33864, 33876; Taylor, *Heresy and orthodoxy*, p. 6; Michel Péronnet, 'Les évêques français et le livre au XVI^e siècle: auteurs, éditeurs et censeurs', in Aquilon and Martin, eds., *Le livre dans l'Europe*, pp. 159–69, at p. 160.

⁴⁶ 'Nicolas Chesneau (lequel comme volontiers fait imprimer les livres, lesquels il cognoist prouffitables & nécessaires à la Republique chrestienne, aussi ne propose il rien legerement, sans estre bien assure) par la diligence duquel iceux Sermons ont esté cherchez, reveuz, corrigez, & imprimez, m'a beaucoup confirmé iceux sermons estre de cestuy, au nom duquel ils sont publiez ... usant de la familiere amitié, laquelle de long temps a esté reciproque entre nous deux.' *FB* 33857; François Le Picart, *Les sermons, et instructions chrestiennes, pour tous les jours de Caresme, & Feries de Pasques* (Paris, 1565), sigs *4r–v; Taylor, *Heresy and orthodoxy*, pp. 1–5.

on Chesneau's part, it was a way of paying a discreet compliment to potential patrons.

Funeral orations for the duc de Guise were printed in Reims by Lorraine's printer and sold or reprinted in Paris by Chesneau and contributed to making the assassinated duke a martyr of the Catholic cause.⁴⁷ Chesneau himself conferred upon François the status of martyr in one of his many epistles to Renée de Lorraine: 'I refer to the words of your brother, Monseigneur the reverend cardinal de Lorraine ... you should rejoice today that God has called the illustrious and magnanimous prince, Francois de Lorraine, your brother, to the greatest glory that there is in paradise, after the Apostles, that is martyrdom.'⁴⁸ In addition, Chesneau published Emperor Ferdinand's statement of support for Lorraine's policy at Trent together with a defence of Mary Stuart's claim to the English throne.⁴⁹ An epistle by Jerome Osorius to Elizabeth I appended to Ferdinand's letter constituted further defiance of the crown that was desperately trying to keep good relations with its neighbour.⁵⁰

Lorraine's return from the Council of Trent in 1564 marked his further estrangement from court: he pioneered Tridentine reform in his own archdiocese in the face of Gallican opposition and criticized the Peace of Amboise. Chesneau, who had become the cardinal's unofficial printer in Paris, collaborated with Foigny in Hervet's French edition of the Council's canons.⁵¹ Moreover, Chesneau began producing works of instruction for the laity and lower clergy, including catechisms, manuals of devotion, and breviaries that coincided with the cardinal's agenda of reform.⁵² Chesneau's commitment to the Guise and their cause is reflected in an epistle he addressed to 'all true Christians' in 1566, pandering to

⁴⁷ *FB* 44294: Julius Pogianus, *Oraison funebre, faite a Rome aux obseques & funerailles de ... François de Lorraine* (Paris, 1563); *FB* 16471: Bernard Dominici, *Sermon funebre fait a Nancy, aux obseques & funerailles de feu ... François de Lorraine* (Paris, 1563); *FB* 19616: Ferdinand, *Lettres consolatoires de la majesté Imperiale, sur la mort de monsieur de Guise* (Paris, 1563).

⁴⁸ 'à fin que j'use des paroles de Monseigneur le reverendissime cardinal de Lorraine, vostre frere ... vous devez aujourd'huy vous resjouir ... que Dieu ... appelle ce tres-illustre & tresmagnanime prince, Francois de Lorraine, vostre frere, à une gloire la plus grande & glorieuse qui soit en paradis, apres celle des Apostres, qui est le martyre'. *FB* 33849: Le Picart, *Les sermons ... depuis la Trinité jusques à l'Advent*, sigs. A2r–A3v.

⁴⁹ *FB* 19600: Ferdinand, *Les graves et saintes remonstrances de l'Empereur Ferdinand, à nostre saint pere le Pape* (Paris, 1563); Tallon, *La France et le Concile de Trente*, p. 545 n. 91; *FB* 37008: Marie Stuart, *La harangue de tresnoble et tresvertueuse ... Mariet d'Estuart* (Paris, 1563).

⁵⁰ Osorius's tract was reprinted by itself in 1565, *FB* 40089; Alexander S. Wilkinson, *Mary Queen of Scots and French public opinion, 1542–1600* (Basingstoke, 2004).

⁵¹ *FB* 49758, 49760: Gentian Hervet, *Le saint, sacré, universel, et general concilde de Trente* (Paris, 1564).

⁵² *FB* 45966–9: François Richardot, *Reigle et guide des curez, vicaires, & tous recteurs des eglises parrochiales* (Paris, 1564); *FB* 6471: Legier Bontemps, *La reigle des chrestiens: et maniere de bien, & vertueusement vivre en tous estats, selon les commandemens de Dieu* (Paris, 1564); *FB* 6473: Legier Bontemps, *Sommaire de la doctrine et maniere de soy bien confesser* (Paris, 1564); *FB* 28866: Gentian Hervet, *Catechisme, et ample instruction de tout ce qui appartient au devoir d'un Chrestien* (Paris, 1568); *FB* 6479: Legier Bontemps, *La reigle des chrestiens: contenant les doctrines & enseignemens que les curez & vicaires doivent ... faire à tous ceux desquels ils ont la charge* (Paris, 1569).

the laity's opposition to the royal policy of conciliation. Chesneau blamed the rise of heresy on the crown for failing to reform the abuses of the clergy and called upon its members to lead the people in a holy war. He committed himself to be 'God's lieutenant on earth' wielding books as spiritual weapons and encouraged others to take up arms against heresy:

Divine will has called up men to defend [the church] through whom he wants to declare Himself enemy of its enemies, who unlike our adversaries have taken spiritual as well as corporeal weapons, and thus armed, are ready and do not spare themselves to guard its integrity so that we can also render ourselves worthy to be His lieutenants on earth.⁵³

The epistle evokes an oath to safeguard the church against heresy that lay confraternities increasingly demanded of its members prefiguring the League.⁵⁴

For my part, even if I am one of the least [worthy], I promise nonetheless to do so, as I have already begun to do here, and protest for the future to continue, addressing an epistle to you ... a copy of which fell into my hands, by the grace of God and of our friends that I presently offer to your attention.⁵⁵

Given the role that the Catholic laity played in popular massacres of Protestants this was as direct a call to violence as can be found in this period. Chesneau thought that the war with heresy preceded the last days, an observation that corroborates Denis Crouzet's thesis that violence was spurred by fear of the end of time.⁵⁶ Chesneau's apocalypticism is revealed in his edition of Hyppolitus's *Description des miseres et calamitez des derniers temps* and his preface to one of the editions of Le Picart's sermons quoting Matthew 24: 4-13, 1 Tim. 4, and 2 Tim. 3 (marginal notes in between brackets):

and you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet ... [true description of the present times] ... in later times some will renounce the faith ... in the last days distressing times will come [the last days ... in which we are ... Do we want a more patent and manifest description of the cause of the troubles in which we presently are...?]

⁵³ 'la bonté divine ... a suscité pour la munir & defendre, hommes par lesquels se veult declarer ennemy des ennemis d'icelle ... lesquels non ainsi que les adversaires ... ont prins les armes tant corporelles & visibles ... lesquels, dy je ainsi armes, sont prests & ne s'espargnent pour le garder en son integrité ... afin aussi [que] nous nous rendions dignes ... d'estre ses lieutenans en terre'. *FB* 23406: François Grandin, *Conférence de la doctrine et gentil evangile des nouveaux ministres & principaux pilliers de la nouvelle Eglise* (Paris, 1566), sigs. A2r-B3r.

⁵⁴ Robert Harding, 'The mobilization of confraternities against the Reformation in France', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 11 (1980), pp. 85-107.

⁵⁵ 'Ce que de ma part, encores que sois des moindres, promets nonobstant faire, ainsi que ja ay par cy devant commencé, & proteste pour l'advenir continuer, vous faisant part d'une epistre ... la coppie duquel discours estant tombée entre mes mains, par la grace de Dieu & de noz amis ... que presentement nous vous en faisons part'. *Ibid.*, sigs. A2r-B3r.

⁵⁶ *FB* 30303: Hyppolite, *Description des miseres et calamitez des derniers temps* (Paris, 1566); Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu: la violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-vers 1610)* (Seyssel, 1990), p. 207.

Chesneau nonetheless offered his books as antidotes to despair: ‘having drawn the rope from the well, through the recovering and printing of the present sermons ... that will give us the water of such doctrine that will give us health and healing instead of making us die’.⁵⁷ As Larrissa Taylor observed Chesneau was more a ‘prophet of the apocalypse’ than Le Picart, contrary to what Crouzet had argued.⁵⁸

The tension between the evocation of a holy war before the last days and the antidote of pure doctrine in the same epistle reflects the hesitations of the French Catholic establishment between coercion and persuasion. It is further illustrated in Chesneau’s involvement in Benoist’s vernacular Catholic Bible in association with Michelle Guillard, Sébastien Nivelles, and Gabriel Buon. Indeed in the preface, Benoist indicated that disseminating the word of God was the surest way to achieve a bloodless victory over heresy: ‘It is through God, the way to obtain victory over the heretics without spilling blood and without risk.’⁵⁹ Benoist had already produced a compilation of contested passages of Scripture as a didactic tool for refuting heresy intended for the laity in 1565 and it was reproduced in the Bible.⁶⁰ The blanket ban of vernacular Bibles by the Sorbonne in 1525 had had disastrous consequences for the French printers as it opened them up to competition from abroad. The Council of Trent had not authorized or banned vernacular Bibles outright but authorized their consultation under supervision and with the authorization of the local bishop: ‘lest the sheep of Christ go hungry or the children ask for bread and there is no one to break it for them’.⁶¹ Chesneau and his partners interpreted this as an invitation to make up for lost time and exploit the conflict of interest between the crown and the Sorbonne over censorship.

The Benoist Bible had been given a royal *permission* dated 26 December 1565, provided that the Sorbonne could not find anything unorthodox in its texts or notes. In February 1566 the crown issued the Edict of Moulins that concentrated *permissions* and privileges in its hands although it paid lip service to the Sorbonne’s right of regard for works of theology.⁶² The Bible controversy demonstrates that

⁵⁷ ‘Voudroit on avoir plus patente & manifeste description de la cause des troubles ou nous sommes de present ... ayans mis la corde au puy, par le recouvrement et impression des presens sermons ... qui nous bailleront de l’eau de telle doctrine, qu’au lieu de nous faire mourir, nous donnera santé & guerison’. *FB* 33859; François Le Picart, *Les sermons et instructions chrestiennes ... depuis Pasques jusques à la Trinité* (Paris, 1566), sigs A2r–A7v. ⁵⁸ Taylor, *Heresy and orthodoxy*, p. 188.

⁵⁹ ‘C’est de par Dieu, le moyen d’avoir la victoire des heretiques, sans espandre le sang, & rien hazarder’. *FB* 4385–8; René Benoist, *La sainte Bible, contenant le vieil et nouveau testament* (Paris, 1566), sigs †3r–v; *FB* 4396–9; René Benoist, *La sainte Bible contenant le Vieil & Nouveau Testament, latin françois, chacune version correspondant l’une à l’autre, verset à verset* (Paris, 1568).

⁶⁰ *FB* 3466; René Benoist, *Exposition et resolution de certains principaux passages tant du vieil que du nouveau testament* (Reims, 1565); Francis Higman, ‘Les advertissemens des Bibles de René Benoist (1566, 1568)’, in Higman, ed., *Libre et découvrir*, pp. 563–71, at p. 567.

⁶¹ Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: incarnation and liturgy* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 228; Tallon, *La France et le Concile de Trente*, p. 712; Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils* (London, 1990), pp. 732–6, at p. 735. ⁶² Pallier, *Recherches sur l’imprimerie*, p. 38.

this remained a dead letter as the Sorbonne repeatedly petitioned the privy council for the printers to be punished and the Bible to be quashed, all to no avail. The printers' defiance of these injunctions must have been fuelled by the knowledge that the Sorbonne no longer had much influence over the decisions of the privy council. Moreover, the Sorbonne injunction of 1569 revealed that Benoist continued to exploit his 1563 privilege without its consent, and this irrespectively of the Edict of Moulins.⁶³ Seemingly untouched by this controversy and thanks to the protection of the bishop of Paris, Pierre de Gondi, Benoist became *curé* of St Eustache in 1568 and was made *lecteur royal* in 1572.⁶⁴ His Bible finally received the approval of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Louvain and was printed in 1577 in Antwerp by Christophe Plantin with a privilege by Philip II.⁶⁵

Similarly untroubled by these events Chesneau bought a second house in the rue St Jacques adjoining his workshop in 1567 and increased his production of expensive in-quartos and in-folios.⁶⁶ Pettegree argued that once a 'pamphlet moment' had passed, the market was glutted with cheap polemical works and as demand declined printers were forced to approach a different market.⁶⁷ In 1567 Chesneau entered in collaboration with Jean Talpin, who, like Benoist, had been granted an authorial privilege and Chesneau produced the near majority of Talpin's vernacular output.⁶⁸ With Talpin, Chesneau resumed the strategy that had been employed with the *Contrariez* at the beginning of his career, compiling short works that could also be sold separately:

I hereby present you a brief exhortation to the Christian man with a remonstrance to those who have strayed from the faith that would have been included in a book I wrote for the benefit of priests but could also have been sold separately to whom desired it: if I had not revised, corrected and augmented it as much.⁶⁹

Indeed Talpin's works were sold as a compilation or with separate title-pages and forthcoming titles were advertised at the end of each tract, going so far as to announce the time the new title would be printed:

Friendly reader, if you want to know the five principal marks of the Church of which we have only dealt with one, in the remonstrance that we have made to the Christians

⁶³ Charles Duplessis d'Argentré, ed., *Collectio judiciorum de novis erroribus* (Paris, 1728–36), pp. 395–442, at pp. 398, 406–9, 428–9.

⁶⁴ Emile Pasquier, *René Benoist: le pape des Halles (1521–1608)* (Paris, 1913); Alison Carter, 'René Benoist and the instruction of the Catholic laity' (Ph.D. thesis, Durham, 2003).

⁶⁵ Higman, 'Les advertissemens des Bibles'; Tallon, *La France et le Concile de Trente*, p. 127.

⁶⁶ MS, 'Renouard Alphabétique', Usuel Réserve Service C59 (6).

⁶⁷ Pettegree, *The culture of persuasion*, p. 149.

⁶⁸ *FB* 48889, 48892–916.

⁶⁹ 'Je vous presente ... une briesve exhortation au Chrestien ... avec une remonstrance au desvoyé de la foy ... laquelle ... eust esté inserée au livre que j'ay fait en faveur des Curez, & extraite à part pour la vendre à tous ceux qui la demanderoient: si est-ce que ... je l'ay reveue, corrigée et augmentée de beaucoup'. *FB* 48892; Jean Talpin, *Conseil et advertisement au Chrestien, pour se garder de tomber en heresie* (Paris, 1567), sig. Azv.

who have separated themselves from the Roman Church, you will find them all amply discussed in our book on the Examination and Resolution of the truth and of the True Church (that will be printed in twelve days) but not in this one but in another that contains five separate books.⁷⁰

Self-advertising was also employed in 1573 by Benoist who provided his readers with a complete catalogue of his works to date comprising no less than fourteen pages.⁷¹ This may be an indication of the difficulties that the printers had in selling their stock, although many in-octavo titles from 1561 were re-issued in the wake of the second and third Wars of Religion.⁷² The Peace of Longjumeau in 1568 occasioned a near final break of Lorraine's relations with the royal court, and the increased radicalization of the Guise that would culminate in the League. Chesneau participated in this movement by publishing the works of the French Jesuit Emond Auger, who had entered in a special relationship with the future Henri III who then embodied all the hopes of the radical Catholics.⁷³ Chesneau's zeal for the Catholic cause was further manifested in his editions of Jean le Masle's works that celebrated the death of Admiral Coligny and enjoined Huguenots to convert in the wake of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572.⁷⁴

In tune with the Catholic renewal that was taking place, notably with the emergence of the leaguer movement, Chesneau produced many works that advocated new forms of devotion.⁷⁵ Chesneau benefited from the newly found interest for the Council of Trent that followed the assembly of the clergy of Blois of 1576 and would culminate in its final adoption in 1619.⁷⁶ Of particular interest are

⁷⁰ 'Amy, lecteur, si tu veux entendre les cinq principales marques de l'Eglise ... desquelles nous n'avons traicté que de l'une, en la remonstrance qu'avons faite aux Chrestiens qui se sont separez de l'Eglise Romaine ... tu les trouveras toutes amplement traictes en nostre livre de l'Examen & Resolution de la verité & vraye Eglise (qui sera dedans douze jours imprimé) ... non pas en cestuy ... mais en un autre, lequel contient cinq petits livres'. *Ibid.*, sigs. F2v–3r advertising FB 48893, 48894, 48897, and 48905.

⁷¹ FB 3511: René Benoist, *Refutation des vains pretendus fondemens de certains lieux de l'écriture sainte* (Paris, 1569), sig. E4v advertising FB 3447; FB 3520: René Benoist, *Catecheses ou instructions touchant les poinctz à present controuerses en la religion* (Paris, 1573), sigs. ē1r–8v.

⁷² FB 34770: Antoine Du Val, *Les contrarietez et contredicts qui se trouvent en la doctrine de Jean Calvin, de Luter, & autres nouveaux euangelistes* (Paris, 1567).

⁷³ FB 2154: Emond Auger, *Sommaire des heresies, abus, impietez et blasphemies qui sont en la cene des calvinistes* (Paris, 1568); Eric Nelson, *The Jesuits and the monarchy: Catholic reform and political authority in France (1590–1615)* (Aldershot, 2005).

⁷⁴ FB 33790: Jean le Masle, *Chant d'allegresse sur la mort de Gaspar de Coligny* (Paris, 1572); FB 33792: Jean le Masle, *Exhortation aux rebelles et seditieux, de bien tost abjurer leur heresie* (Paris, 1573); FB 33795: Jean le Masle, *Brief discours sur les troubles qui depuis douze ans ont continuellement agité & tourmenté le royaume de France* (Paris, 1573).

⁷⁵ FB 50709: Simon Verrept, *Le manuel de devotion* (Paris, 1575); FB 6910–12: Jean Boulaese, *Histoire veritable de la guerison admirable, advenue et faite par la bonté & misericorde de Dieu tout puissant* (Paris, 1578).

⁷⁶ Marc Venard, 'Catholicism and resistance to the Reformation in France, 1555–1585', in Philip Benedict, Guido Marnef, Henk van Nierop, and Marc Venard, eds., *Reformation, revolt, and civil war in France and the Netherlands, 1555–1585* (Amsterdam, 1999), pp. 133–48, at p. 134; Marc Venard, *Le Catholicisme à l'épreuve dans la France du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 2000), p. 153.

translations of Church Fathers by Jacques de Billy published in 1573 in octavo and in-160 in 1577, 1578, and 1579.⁷⁷ Between 1577 and 1583 Chesneau also printed no less than seventeen posthumous editions of Vigor's notoriously radical sermons.⁷⁸ In the course of the 1570s privileges issued in Rome for the production of canonical texts encouraged the formation of companies, notably the *société des usages*, and Chesneau made his mark with the edition of patristic texts. In 1582, shortly before his death, Chesneau created with Michel Sonnius, Jacques and Baptiste Dupuys, and Jacques Kerver a company to exploit papal privilege for the publication of Church Fathers.⁷⁹

In the course of the 1570s Chesneau's business had grown to become one of the most important in Paris; his wealth is reflected in solicitors' records that were transcribed by Philippe Renouard and attest of various property transactions. Chesneau married Marie Aurillet who gave him four children between 1572 and 1577 and his second wife was Jeanne de Roigny, related to the printer Michel de Roigny.⁸⁰ By the time of his death in 1584, Chesneau owned at least one farm outside Paris that he rented out to a tenant farmer and was seized by one of his many creditors.⁸¹ Chesneau was one of a group of wealthy Parisian printers whose books were found at the Frankfurt book fair in a larger proportion than their colleagues.⁸² The international dimension of Chesneau's trade is further indicated by his printing of Spanish works for a client of the queen of Navarre in 1583.⁸³ Moreover his role as an international bookseller is indicated by his will that lists books from the Empire, Italy, and three bales of books from Medina del Campo in Spain.⁸⁴

The 1570s was marked by an economic crisis that culminated in the monetary reform of 1577 and a strike of the *compagnons-imprimeurs* that occasioned a reform of the profession in 1571 with the Edict of Gaillon.⁸⁵ Some printers had taken advantage of lower production costs to farm printing abroad, a practice that Chesneau had to discourage as the second named syndic of the community of printers in 1575.⁸⁶ The economic difficulties and the new legislation that protected

⁷⁷ *FB* 5663–5; Jacques de Billy, *Sonnets spirituels, recueillis pour la plus part des anciens theologiens* (Paris, 1577).

⁷⁸ *FB* 50888, 50890, 5092–8, 50900–5; Simon Vigor, *Les sermons et predications chrestiennes, et Catholiques, sur le symbole des apotres* (Paris, 1577); Diefendorf, *Beneath the cross*, pp. 152–8.

⁷⁹ Pallier, 'Les réponses catholiques', p. 331; Pallier, *Recherches sur l'imprimerie*, pp. 12–13.

⁸⁰ MS, 'Renouard Alphabétique', Usuel Réserve Service C59 (6).

⁸¹ MS, Philippe Renouard, 'Documents sur les imprimeurs', Usuel Réserve Service C65 (1), fos. 31–4.

⁸² Pallier, *Recherches sur l'imprimerie*, p. 24.

⁸³ Julian de Medrano, *La silvia curiosa, de Julian de Medrano* (Paris, 1583).

⁸⁴ Philippe Renouard, *Documents sur les imprimeurs* (Geneva, 1969), p. 83; Pallier, *Recherches sur l'imprimerie*, p. 10 n. 40.

⁸⁵ Jotham Parsons, 'Governing sixteenth-century France: the monetary reforms of 1577', *French Historical Studies*, 26 (2003), pp. 1–30; Pallier, *Recherches sur l'imprimerie*, pp. 5–6; Bernard Barbiche, 'Le régime de l'édition', in Martin, Chartier, and Vivet, eds., *Histoire de l'édition française* (Paris, 1983), pp. 367–77, at p. 368.

⁸⁶ Pallier, *Recherches sur l'imprimerie*, pp. 6 n. 4, 23–4.

the *compagnons* encouraged printers to compete with each other, sometimes benefiting from the misfortune of others. For instance Chesneau was in competition with Pierre L'Huillier over the publication of Sebastian Muenster's *Cosmographie universelle*: when L'Huillier fled Paris in the aftermath of St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, Chesneau acquired a copy of the *Cosmographia* and took over its production.⁸⁷ With L'Huillier's flight, Chesneau had inherited his rival's collaboration with François de Belleforest with whom he embarked on ambitious projects that were likely to attract the attention of the elite.⁸⁸ Belleforest benefited from the patronage of the Guise and specialized in translations of Church Fathers that was occasion for Chesneau to increase his share of the market for expensive in-folio editions.⁸⁹

With Belleforest, Chesneau produced a bilingual multi-volume folio edition of Flavius Josephus's *History* that was printed for him by Sonnius in association with Frémy.⁹⁰ In 1570, he produced Belleforest's translation of Augustine's *City of God*, and in 1571 Latin editions of St John Chrysostome, Eusebius, and Erasmus that was printed for him by Nicolas Bruslé and Frémy.⁹¹ Chesneau employed Jacques Tigeou for translations of Augustine and Cyprian which was interpreted as a betrayal by Belleforest who wrote: 'I am nonplussed that another has beaten me to this translation.'⁹² Chesneau spared no expenses for these prestigious works and lavished attention down to the last detail, including paper, that had to be made specially bearing the initials of the author in the watermark.⁹³ Chesneau's extravagance is also attested by a lavishly illustrated in-folio edition of a history of Burgundy by Pierre de St Julien that was printed for him by Henri Thierry and comprises several plates of the major cities of the region.⁹⁴ Chesneau

⁸⁷ Simonin, *François de Belleforest*, pp. 181–2 n. 44; *FB* 38868: Sebastian Muenster, *La cosmographie universelle de tout le monde* (Paris, 1575).

⁸⁸ Simonin, *François de Belleforest*, pp. 30 n. 37, 120–2; *FB* 22263–4: Augustin Gallo, *Secrets de la vraye agriculture* (Paris, 1572); *FB* 3229: François de Belleforest, *Harengues militaires, et concions de princes, capitaines, ambassadeurs, et autres manians tant la guerre que les affaires d'Estat* (Paris, 1572); *FB* 5733: Pierre Bizare, *Histoire de la guerre qui c'est passée entre les venitiens et la saincte ligue, contre les Turcs pour l'Isle de Cypre, és années 1570. 1571. & 1572* (Paris, 1573).

⁸⁹ Simonin, *François de Belleforest*, pp. 74, 104–5.

⁹⁰ *FB* 31278, 31281: Flavius Josephus, *L'histoire de Flave Joseph: Latin François, chacune version correspondante l'une à l'autre, verset à verset* (Paris, 1569–70).

⁹¹ *FB* 2239: St Augustine, *De la cité de Dieu* (Paris, 1570); St John Chrysostome, *Historia ecclesiastica scrip. Graec. Ioan. Chrystophonsoni* (Paris, 1571); Erasmus, *Adagiorum Des. Erasmi* (Paris, 1571); Eusebius, *Historiae ecclesiasticae scriptores graeci* (Paris, 1571); J. de La Caille, *Histoire de l'imprimerie et de la librairie où l'on voit son origine et son progrès jusqu'en 1689* (Paris, 1689), p. 156.

⁹² 'je suis marry qu'autre m'ai devancé en la traduction'. Simonin, *François de Belleforest*, pp. 73–4; *FB* 2242: St Augustine, *Response a ceux qui demandent vivre en liberte de conscience, prouuant amplement que les heretiques doivent estre constraincts par les loix & ordonnances des princes Chrestiens* (Paris, 1573); *FB* 14980: Cyprian, *Les oeuvres de saint Cecile Cyprian, jadis eveque de Carthage, tres victorieux martyr de Jesus Christ* (Paris, 1574); *FB* 14981: Cyprian, *Deux traittez contre les basteleurs, joueurs de farces, pippes de detz & de cartes* (Paris, 1574).

⁹³ *FB* 22008: Antoine Fuméc, *Les histoires d'Antoine Fumée* (Paris, 1574); Ian Christie-Miller, 'The paper used by the printer Nicolas Chesneau' (unpublished communication, 2000), 13 pages.

⁹⁴ *FB* 47213: Pierre de St Julien, *De l'origine des bourguignons, et antiquité des estats de bourgogne* (Paris, 1581).

collaborated with Benoist on a monumental history of the saints for which Chesneau commissioned a series of woodcuts: ‘to content the affectation of the simple’.⁹⁵ Belleforest mentioned Chesneau in the *Cosmographie* as a printer who produced ‘beautiful books that were printed by his diligence and at his expense, and that of his friends, otherwise he would not have managed’.⁹⁶

By the end of his career Chesneau had fulfilled his ambitions of serving the Republic of Letters with translations of Philo, Livy, Plato, Cicero, Caesar, Philostratus, and Chalcondyle. He was now employing several printers, notably Sonnius, Bruslé, Thierry, Mamert Patisson, and Jean Poupy, but at a greater cost than at the beginning of his career when in-octavos ensured a quick return on investment. When Chesneau died in 1584, he left his widow bankrupt and his property was seized by his many creditors and former associates such as Sonnius, Dupuys, Frémy, and Poupy. His stock was liquidated so that it could go towards the upkeep of his under-age children that were placed under tutelage and his houses were sold to reimburse his creditors, notably Claude Chaudière and Sonnius.⁹⁷ Abel L’Angelier absorbed the activity of the printers and authors who had worked with Chesneau, notably Thierry and Claude Bruneval, and copied his trademark in-quartos.⁹⁸

Chesneau died just before the League at a time when the book market was in crisis and was boosted by the wave of pamphlets that attacked Henri III’s choice of Henri of Navarre as his successor.⁹⁹ One of Chesneau’s creditors, Chaudière, took over the association with Benoist and became one of the stalwarts of the League. Many printers with whom he had entered in association, notably Nivelles, Buon, the Dupuys brothers, and Sonnius remained in Paris during the League. Baptiste Dupuys and Sébastien Nivelles took an active part in the League while L’Huillier had followed the king after the Day of the Barricades. Chesneau’s sympathy for the Guise’s agenda suggests that he would most certainly have been one of the leaguer printers that produced many libellous pamphlets that lambasted Henri III. It is a matter of speculation whether Chesneau would have profited from France’s second most important ‘pamphlet moment’ culminating in 1588–9 at the height of the League. Instead, Chesneau’s career stopped at the end of an economic crisis that crippled his business, having financed himself many expensive editions that did not sell.

⁹⁵ ‘pour contenter l’affection du peuple plus simple’. René Benoist, *Histoire de la vie, mort, passion, et miracles des saints, desquels, principalement l’Église Catholique fait feste & memoire par toute la Chrestienté* (Paris, 1577) unidentified in *FB*; Simonin, *François de Belleforest*, pp. 187–90.

⁹⁶ ‘beaux livres qui ont été imprimés par sa diligence et ayant fait les frais d’iceux, aidé de ses amis, car autrement il n’y eût pu satisfaire’. *FB* 38868: Muenster, *La cosmographie universelle de tout le monde*, fo. 181.

⁹⁷ MS, Philippe Renouard, ‘Documents sur les imprimeurs’, Usuels de la Réserve Service C. 65 (1), fos. 31–4.

⁹⁸ Jean Balsamo and Michel Simonin, *Abel L’Angelier & Françoise de Louvain (1574–1620): suivi du catalogue des ouvrages publiés par Abel L’Angelier (1574–1610) et la veuve L’Angelier (1610–1620)* (Geneva, 2002), pp. 25, 63–4, 109, 111–12.

⁹⁹ Pallier, *Recherches sur l’imprimerie*, pp. 120–1, 556–7.

Chesneau's career neatly situated between the two 'pamphlet moments' of 1561–2 and 1588–9 is a good illustration of how the demand for short in-octavo works of religious controversy could make or break a printer's business. Printers and booksellers may have joined the League out of conviction but also for economic reasons, just as Chesneau had chosen to produce works of religious invective on the eve of the French Wars of Religion. One of the important conclusions to be drawn from the pamphlet moments is that works that defended Catholic orthodoxy sold well and answered demand. Chesneau was a humanist printer who fulfilled his ambition late in life when he produced many fine translations of classical authors and Church Fathers. But these proved to be his undoing as luxurious in-quartos and in-folios were much harder to liquidate than short in-octavo pamphlets, although the profit margins were much smaller.

In the course of his career, Chesneau undoubtedly benefited from his association with Benoist, who was the most prolific vernacular author of his time, and with the cardinal de Lorraine. The extent of patronage is unclear, however, and if Chesneau produced the works of theologians in Lorraine's entourage and expressed support for the Guise, it may simply have been in response to the public's demand. A more systematic study of the best-sellers of the French Wars of Religion remains to be undertaken, on a par with the work that was done for the Lutheran Reformation and the League. The French Catholic Reformation in the 1560s was still in its infancy and no clear demarcation could be made between invective and religious instruction. This phenomenon was clearly misunderstood by the crown that was incapable of curbing the excesses of clerical authors who benefited from the sympathy of like-minded printers. Chesneau's personal conviction clearly resonated with the reading public's opposition to the royal policy of conciliation and responded to the laity's thirst for news and religious instruction in the face of heresy.

The cardinal de Lorraine also understood the role that printing could play in propagating his idiosyncratic agenda of reform and from 1563 onwards Chesneau can be said to have been the cardinal's unofficial printer in Paris. The Sorbonne and the *parlement's* opposition to the Edicts of Pacification allowed a number of authors, notably Hervet and Benoist, to attack Protestant adversaries relatively unmolested. Similarly the Benoist Bible was able to play on the crown's attempt to wrest control of the printing press back from the Sorbonne and the *parlement* with the Edict of Moulins of 1566. Printers were able to play both sides: the intransigence of the *parlement* and the Sorbonne to publish vitriolic material on one hand and the support of the crown for material that was deemed unorthodox on the other. As Chesneau's business grew, so did his standing in the profession, and his role as syndic attests to the trust that was put in him by the crown to enforce the Edict of Gaillon of 1571. Towards the end of his life, although still committed to Catholic renewal, Chesneau sought to fulfil the ambition that he had expressed at the beginning of his career. Expensive in-folios, however, did not sell as well as cheap in-octavos had done in the 1560s when Chesneau had asserted that pamphlets were weapons in a spiritual war. This

point was proven ironically shortly after Chesneau's death during the League although printers' impact on opinion-forming dates back from at least the beginning of the French Wars of Religion. The Catholic Reformation in France was shaped by vernacular books as surely as the Protestant Reformation was in other parts of Europe.