

*Guy de Brès's »Le baston
de la foy chrestienne«*

*From Personal Notebook to Patristic
Anthology (1555–1565)*

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1. Introduction

Guy de Brès (c. 1520–1567) is best known as the primary author of the *Confession de foy*, published in 1561, translated into Dutch in 1562, which is also called »Confessio Belgica« or »Belgic Confession«. His very first, far less known publication is an anthology entitled *Le baston de la foy chrestienne*, whose first edition appeared in 1555. This work is a compilation of quotations from the Scriptures and the church fathers, organized thematically. Within a time span of no more than ten years, this work saw at least seventeen editions, all of which appeared during De Brès's lifetime. If a Dutch translation existed, as may indeed have been the case, it at any rate did not survive in publication.¹ In 1577 the book was translated into English as *The Staffe of Christian Faith* (although never reprinted). After the death of De Brès, *Le baston* was reprinted only a single time, in Saumur in 1601. Nevertheless, the work can be regarded as a French language bestseller, being

¹ See Erik A. de Boer, »Le baston« in Nederlandse vertaling?, in: Guido de Bres: Zijn leven, zijn belijden, ed. Emile Braekman, Erik A. de Boer, Utrecht 2011, 90–93.

published between 1555 and 1565 in Antwerpen, Geneva, Lyon, and Caen. As such, it was a popular handbook in the clash of the confessions.

The present study focuses on the genesis of *Le baston de la foy chrestienne*, investigating it in relation to the theological formation of the author of the Belgic Confession. The question regarding De Brès's theological training is all the more a pressing one since, as Johan Decavele has pointed out, the formation of all known preachers from the Southern *Pays Bas* (Nether Lands) in a religious order or university is known, with the one exception of Guy de Brès.² His second, larger work, entitled *La racine, source et fondement des Anabaptistes* (1565), also testifies to his intellectual maturity and later theological orientation in a dispute he held with the Anabaptists of his days, but it contains no patristic references. The letters of De Brès, which report the disputes held in prison in 1567 and were published in *Procedures tenues* (1568), do in contrast testify to his knowledge and handling of patristic sources. The present article, however, will look primarily at the first work of De Brès that testifies to his knowledge of the fathers of the church.

2. The Swiss connection

Most biographies relate the bare facts of De Brès's birth (c. 1520) in Bergen (Mons), in the Southern Low Countries, as the son of a glass painter, and of his flight to London around 1548.³ Upon his return to the country of his birth, De Brès became minister of the Word in Rijssel (Lille) around 1550. In 1555 he published *Le baston de la foy chrestienne*, before travelling on to Lausanne and Geneva for further studies in 1556. But what can be said of De Brès's theological education? Is there a link between his earlier

² Johan Decavele, *La place de Guy de Brès dans la Réforme et son époque*, in: *The Belgic Confession at 450*, ed. Andreas J. Beck et al., Maastricht 2012 (Analecta Bruxelliana 15), 30–40.

³ Biographies: L.A. Van Langeraad, *Guido de Bray: Zijn leven en werken. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het Zuid-Nederlandsche protestantisme*, Zierikzee 1884; A.L.E. Verheyden, *Anabaptism in Flanders 1530–1650*, Scottdale, PA 1961 (Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History 9); Braekman/De Boer, *Guido de Bres*.

work on *Le baston* (which was probably finalized in Ghent) and his subsequent pursuit of theological studies?

The aforementioned facts concerning De Brès's whereabouts until 1556 are all found in one source, namely, the brief biographical account which Jean Crespin gave in the booklet *Procedures tenues* (1568) and later incorporated into his *Histoire des vrays tesmoins de la verité de l'Evangile* (1570). In the absence of further data from this period in his life, De Brès's subsequent biographers have tended to fill the lacunae by recounting who else was at work in those cities when he is thought to have been living there, and whom he therefore may have met or heard. But are there additional historical data which may substantiate Crespin's testimony and inform us on De Brès's theological formation?

In the long letter which Guy de Brès wrote from prison to his flock in Valenciennes, he reported on the interrogation he underwent in April 1567. The bishop of Arras, François Richardot, made an opening statement to which De Brès responded as follows:

»Regarding my salvation, I dare say that I have been as eager to learn as any man. For that reason I have investigated the various sects and teachings which are found in Christianity, so that at least I could understand, travelling back and forth from one country to the other«.⁴

This statement in which De Brès mentions his travels is somewhat ambiguous, however. After all, it could refer either to the continuous journeys he undertook in serving the faithful in the southern Netherlands, or else, more specifically, to the *peregrinatio academica* on which he embarked through the German and Swiss territories.

Confirmation for Guy de Brès's Swiss connection comes from third party testimonies. The first is the long report on the confiscation of papers from De Brès's hiding place in Doornik (Tournai)

⁴ Procedures ausquelles est deduit comme Guy du Bres et Peregrin de La Grange ont signé par leur sang la doctrine de l'Evangile, in: F. Pijper (ed.), *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, vol. 8, 's-Gravenhage 1911, 561f. Cf. preface to *Le baston*: »L'un des jours nous avons la guerre contre les heretiques Anabaptistes, l'autre contre les Libertins et Epicuriens, contre les Arriens en contre les Davidistes en contre les dissimulateurs, et consequemment contre les venerateurs des Peres, par le zele desquels les enfans de Dieu sont mis à mort« (1558/1, 13).

on 10 January 1562. The report was written by the commissioners who were investigating the whereabouts of De Brès on behalf of the governess, Margaret of Parma. Among De Brès's papers, notes, and books, the officials also found a number of letters. The first letter, whose contents are unknown, is identified as being from the year 1556 and written by Jean Calvin.⁵ The second one was by Petrus Dathenus, »who calls himself minister of the Word of God of the Flemish in Frankfort, and who addresses the said Guy as minister of the Word of God in the Netherlands«.

The next line in the officials' report to the governess contains the first evidence concerning De Brès's formative years: »We have also found out that the said Guy made the start to his aberrations in Lausanne and in Geneva«. Did the letters from Calvin and Dathenus reveal this specific information? This is in any case what the investigators concluded on the basis of the documentation they confiscated from De Brès's lodgings. They also describe a third letter in the report of their findings: »Also another letter to Jean Crespin from the year 1559, who requests from him the catalogue of martyrs who are amidst those who he knows are worthy of that title and honor, since he is making an account both in French as well as in Latin.«⁶ The Genevan printer was thus building a network to obtain reliable sources for his work on Reformed martyrdom, and may have met De Brès in Frankfort during a visit to the book fair there.⁷ The three confiscated letters thus establish a link to Geneva and Calvin in the second half of the 1550s.

But what is the bearing of the details which were later published by Jean Crespin? Guy de Brès and Pérégrin de la Grange were executed on 1 June 1567. The next year a booklet was published anonymously, written on the basis of the letters which De Brès sent

⁵ *Van Langeraad*, Guido de Bray, 22: »[...] et entre icelles une lettre de Jan Calvin de l'an 1556, par lesquelles il respond à certaines questions, que luy avoit proposé ledt. Guy, dont nous envoions extraict à vostre Alteze«. Another point of contact between Geneva and Calvin is documented by the letter which the churches sent to Geneva, asking for approval of the Belgic Confession, see Erik A. de Boer, Calvin's brief over De Bres' belijdenis, in: *Braekman/De Boer*, Guido de Bres, 169–173, 181–183.

⁶ Source: Papiers d'Etat, Correspondence de Tournay, 1561–1563, f. 136–138 (printed in *Van Langeraad*, Guido de Bray, 46).

⁷ Jean-François *Gilmont*, Jean Crespin: un éditeur réformé du XVI^e siècle, Geneva 1981 (*Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 186), 202, n. 65.

from prison to his congregation and which contain the documentation of his trial until the day of his execution: *Procedures tenues à l'endroit de ceux de la religion du Pais-Bas* (1568).⁸ The introduction to this work includes a brief biographical sketch of De Brès, with the following data:

»Concerning his erudition with which God had enriched him – after having made him study in Geneva and Lausanne – it is not necessary to dwell upon this aspect for a long time, since not only his last debates, which are found in this book, testify to it and give proof of his faithfulness, but also a Compilation he made of the Old Doctors, called *Le baston de la foy*, and what he assembled against the Anabaptists [...]«⁹

That Guy de Brès had studied theology in Geneva and Lausanne was thus knowledge preserved in the collective memory of his congregations in Lille, Tournai, and Valenciennes. The editor of this booklet, Jean Crespin, may in fact also have been the one to write these lines.

A third written testimony is found in Crespin's *Histoire des martyrs*. In the 1570 edition of his *Histoire des vrais tesmoins*, the learned editor incorporated the documentation of the trial and execution of Guy de Brès and Pérégrin de la Grange as it had earlier been published as the *Procedures tenues*. He concluded this account with the »specific tale of the life and death of the two said ministers«, together with some other short biographies. Crespin first described De Brès's birth in Mons (Flemish: Bergen), his flight to England, and the time he spent in his first congregation in Lille. In the wake of the trial against the Ogvier family, De Brès then left

⁸ Gilmont identified Jean Crespin in Geneva as the editor (*Gilmont*, Jean Crespin, 257; Jean-François *Gilmont*, *Bibliographie des éditions de Jean Crespin 1550–1572*, vol. 1, Verviers 1981, 68/8; Jean-François *Gilmont*, *Nouveau bilan bibliographique*, in: *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire du Protestantisme Belge* 7/2 (1977), 32.

⁹ »Quant à l'erudition de laquelle Dieu l'avoit enrichi depuis l'avoir fait venir estudier à Geneve et Lausanne, il n'est besoin d'en tenir grand propos, par ce que non seulement ses dernieres disputes contenues en ce livre, en rendent tesmoignage, et font foy de sa fidelité, mais aussi un Recueil qu'il a fait des Anciens Docteurs, intitulé le Baston de la foy, et ce qu'il assemblé contre les Anabaptistes [...]« (Procedures auxquelles est deduit comme Guy du Bres et Peregrin de La Grange ont signé par leur sang la doctrine de l'Evangile, in: *Pijper*, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, vol. 8, 497). Crespin incorporated this booklet from 1568 in the 1570 edition of his *Histoire des vrais tesmoins de la verité de l'Evangile*, book 9, (ed. J.D. Benoit, vol. 3, 533–584).

Lille and travelled to Ghent where, according to Crespin, he compiled his first book, *Le baston de la foy*, »drawn from the old doctors«.

»As he was eager to have a wider range of learning as required for the ministry, he then made his way to Lausanne and Geneva, to that end and also to learn the Latin language. After having lived there for some time he returned to the Netherlands and restored the churches in Lille, Tournai, and Valenciennes [...]«¹⁰

The fact that Crespin published the account of the oppression in Valenciennes and added it to his »History of the True Witnesses« tells us that he was in close touch with the congregation of De Brès and De la Grange.

One example may suffice to illustrate De Brès's involvement in Crespin's enterprise for an account of Reformed martyrdom. The latter began his account of the year 1556 in the *Histoire des martyrs* (1556) by relating the deaths of the four martyrs from Lille in Flanders, namely, the Ogvier household. In the letter written by the elder son Baudechon (and added to the 1564 edition), we find an exhortation to follow the narrow road, »as it has until now been shown to you very faithfully and with great ardour by our brother G[uy] who is well known to and respected by you all«. ¹¹ According to the report, his younger brother Martin Ogvier too had stirred up some of his fellow prisoners, saying: »Be quiet, my brothers, take heart, it is finished: I have endured a last assault. I beseech you, do not forget the holy doctrine of the Gospel and the good lessons you have heard from our brother Guy«. ¹²

¹⁰ [Jean *Crespin*], *Histoire des vrais tesmoins de la verité de l'Evangile, qui de leur sang l'ont signée, depuis Jean Hus jusques au temps present*, [Geneva]: Jean Crespin, 1570: »Depuis, comme il estoit studieux de savoir plus amplement ce qui est requis au ministere, il s'achemina vers Lausanne et Genève, à ces fins et pour apprendre la langue Latine. Apres y avoit demeuré quelque temps, renevu qu'il fut au Pais-bas, redressa les eglises à Lisle, Tournay, et Vallencennes, si bien qu'en servant ausdites villes Dieu le preserva, comme au milieu des feuz allumez, de ne tomer és mains des ennemis« (book 8, p. 690f.; photomechanical reprint 1964).

¹¹ Jean *Crespin*, *Histoire des martyrs persecutez et mis à mort pour la verité de l'evangile, depuis le temps des apostres jusques à present*, ed. Jean-Daniel Benoit, vol. 2, Toulouse 1887, 411.

¹² *Crespin*, *Histoire des martyrs*, ed. Benoit, vol. 2, 415.

The sum of our knowledge of De Brès's education therefore amounts to the following. The report of the commissioners after they had searched De Brès' house in 1561 was based on at least three letters, written to De Brès (by Calvin, Dathenus, and Crespin), proving his ties to Geneva. The second note on his theological formation dates from 1568 and comes from sources close to Crespin. The latter's expanded biographical account (1570) provided more detailed information. The sources therefore allow us to formulate the following initial conclusion: although Guy de Brès had already served as minister, he decided to pursue theological studies in order to improve his skills. His work on the first edition of *Le baston*, which was the fruit of his early ministry, made him aware especially of his lack of knowledge of Latin, the language in which the church fathers were primarily transmitted in the sixteenth century. To remedy this he travelled to the Reformed centres of learning that would have been most profitable to French-speaking students, namely, Lausanne and Geneva.

3. Theological training in London

One question that remains, of course, is how Guy de Brès became a minister of the Word in the first place. Crespin reported that he left Mons (Bergen), the village of his birth, and settled in London »at the time when the good king Edward VI had given harbour and access in the kingdom of Britain to all the faithful.«¹³ Was he trained for the ministry of »prophecy« as it had been instituted there by John a Lasco?¹⁴ It is quite likely that De Brès joined the French-speaking congregation in London (or in one of the villages

¹³ Crespin, *Histoire des martyrs*, ed. Benoit, vol. 3 (1889), 581; cf. Braekman/De Boer, Guido de Bres, 52–62.

¹⁴ Cf. Emile Braekman, *Theological Training of Reformed Ministers of the Low Countries*, in: *Academic Relations Between the Low Countries and the British Isles 1450–1700: Proceedings of the First Conference of Belgian, British and Dutch Historians of Universities held in Ghent 1989*, ed. H. de Ridder-Symoens, J.M. Fletcher, Gent 1989 (*Studia Historica Gandensia* 273), 89. On De Brès and the London »prophétie«, see Erik A. de Boer, *The Genevan School of the Prophets: The Congrégations of the Company of Pastors and their Influence in 16th Century Europe*, Geneva 2012 (*Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 512), 244–249.

on the coast), and visited »la prophétie« held every week on Tuesdays. His ability to translate a Dutch work into French in later years¹⁵ suggests that he may earlier already have been able to understand the Dutch language. If this is true, it is also possible that he attended the Thursday prophecies organized by the Flemish theologian Marten de Cleyne (1523–1559), also known as Micron(ius).¹⁶ But the Latin courses on the Old and New Testament given by Walter Delenus and John a Lasco may at that time still have been too difficult for De Brès to follow.

There is one point in his works at which De Brès seems to hint at his experience in such training centres of the early Reformed refugee churches. In a pamphlet entitled *Oraison au Seigneur* and attributed to Guy de Brès,¹⁷ a section of the prayer is devoted to the ministry of the Word. The author beseeches the Lord to provide his gifts and grace »to us and our children, so that true teaching may be given to them such as it has been in former times in the early Church. We ask you that in all faithful assemblies teaching will be coupled with admonition and correction, and that your holy doctrine will be administered according to the right use of the keys, so that the training in holy propositions (*les exercices des saintes propositions*) and *congrégations*, and also the schools, will be purely instituted and maintained«.¹⁸

The use of the term *congrégations* in this context suggests that de Brès is thinking back to the practice as it had been established in Geneva, the only place where this term was used at the time.¹⁹ The *congrégation* was the weekly Bible study meeting of the Company of Pastors in Geneva where in *lectio continua* a biblical book was

¹⁵ Close to »Le baston« is the translation into French which Guy de Brès made of a Dutch work in 1565: »The Remarkable History of the Betrayal and Imprisonment of Two Good and Faithful Persons in the City of Antwerp, that is Christophle Fabri, Minister of the Word in said city, and Olivier Bouck, Professor in Latin«. The margins contain many patristic and even scholastic quotations.

¹⁶ See the description in Marten *Micron*, Christelicke ordinancien der Nederlantscher ghemeinten te London (1554), ed. W.F. Dankbaar, 's-Gravenhage 1956 (Kerkhistorische studiën 7), 37.

¹⁷ J. *Lindeboom*, Een gebed van Guy de Brès, in: Archief van de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis 20 (1924), 161–178.

¹⁸ *Lindeboom*, Een gebed van Guy de Brès, 176; Guy de Brès: Pages choisies, ed. Emile *Braekman*, Brussels 1967, 27.

¹⁹ See *De Boer*, The Genevan School of the Prophets.

expounded. All ministers were obliged to be present, but also lay members of the Church were welcome to attend and raise questions. In the refugee Churches abroad other forms developed, in which training and selection for the ministry became more central. In his *Le baston de la foy*, de Brès would include a chapter on »the assemblies and gatherings of the faithful« (*des assemblees et congregations des fideles*). Quoting from the New Testament, Hilary of Poitiers, Tertullian, Pliny's letter to Trajan, and the *Historia Tripartita*, De Brès instructed his fellow believers as to how they could defend the gatherings they held as a congregation on Sundays and during the week against the Roman Catholic insistence on attending the Mass. Therefore, the chapter on »assemblées et congrégations« in *Le baston de la foy*, written before the years of his study in Lausanne and Geneva, does not appear to use the term »congrégations« in its technical sense as referring to the kind of Bible study meetings held by pastors during the week (as in Geneva).²⁰ However, the later pamphlet *Oraison au Seigneur*, published in 1564, clearly does point to such meetings for biblical exposition and training for the ministry.

While in London, De Brès may have frequented the »prophétie« of the Walloon church there.²¹ As has been noted, the aforementioned passage from *Oraison du Seigneur* of 1564 testifies to the practice maintained by the ministers of a region (e.g. the classis of Lausanne) or city to hold Bible study meetings, as it had developed in Geneva and was followed in the refugee churches in and around London. The synod of the »Churches under the Cross,« held in Antwerp in November 1564, adopted the following resolution:

»Because the ministers have no opportunity to confer regularly on Christian doctrine except during synod, every time they come together for this matter the ministers who are present shall take turns at the end of every morning and after dinner to treat a passage from Scripture in order to express the unity of doctrine which is among them [...]«²²

²⁰ [Guy de Brès], *Le baston de la foy chrestienne*, [Geneva]: Nicolas Barbier and Thomas Courteau, 1559, 260–263.

²¹ Cf. *Braekman*, Guy de Bres: Pages choisies, 59f.

²² »D'autant que les Ministres n'ont moyen de conferer souvent ensemble de la doctrine Chrestiene, sinon au Synode, que toutes les fois que l'on s'assemblera ensemble pour ceste affaire, les Ministres qui y assisteront, ayent tour-à-tour chaque matinee et apres disner, à traiter quelque passage de l'escriture sainte, pour tesmoigner de l'union

It is not known whether De Brès was present at that synod of November 1564.²³ But then again, he was not the only minister who had been trained abroad in »prophecy«.²⁴

It is not possible to establish the level of training which men like the young Guy de Brès could have received in »la prophétie« in London. While such meetings focused on the exposition of the Scriptures, they lacked any kind of academic standard. De Brès's preparations for the ministry seem to have been limited to the training he received in London. Therefore, at the time he served the faithful during his first tour of duty in Lille from 1550 he 1555, he had to expand his knowledge through personal study. How intense his studies were is testified by the theological notebook which he published after his first five years in the ministry, namely, *Le baston de la foy chrestienne*.

4. Introducing »Le baston de la foy« (1555)

Le baston de la foy chrestienne is not a straightforward presentation of De Brès's own emerging theology, but a compilation from the works of other authors. As an anthology of quotes from the Bible and the church fathers, it is necessary to read between the lines in order to try and detect De Brès's own systematic theological thinking.²⁵ It may in fact be helpful to read this book as the kind of notebook students had more commonly, with De Brès keeping notes on the »loci communes« he detected in Scripture and the fathers when he turned to read them in his personal studies. After all, patristic authority played a large role in Reformation

de doctrine qui est entre eux, et pareillement les Diacres perpetuels, pour voir le profit qu'ils auront fait en l'exercice de leur vocation« (article 3 of the Synod held at la Vigne [Antwerp], 21 November 1564) (Livre synodal contenant les articles résolus dans le synodes des Églises Wallones des Pays-Bas, vol. 1 [1563-1685], 's-Gravenhage 1896, 10).

²³ Braekman/De Boer, Guido de Bres, 198.

²⁴ Cf. Braekman, Theological Training, 89.

²⁵ Jean-François Gilmont, Les écrits de Guy de Brès: Éditions des XVI^e et XVII^e siècles, in: Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire du Protestantisme Belge 5/8 (1971), 265-275; Gilmont, Guy de Bres: Nouveau bilan bibliographique, 29-36; Emile Braekman, Les éditions du »Baston de la foy chrestienne«, in: Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses 56 (1976), 315-345.

polemics.²⁶ *Le baston* came out in 1555, when De Brès had left his congregation in Lille and was working in Gand (Ghent) for a year. He dedicated the book to his flock, a written legacy to his training for defending the Reformed doctrine.

When Guy de Brès compiled the first edition of *Le baston de la foy*, he wrote it explicitly against a book written by a Roman Catholic author, the Parisian monk Nicole Grenier, which was first published in 1547 and widely disseminated since: *Le bouclier de la foy chrestienne* (»The Shield of Faith, in the Form of a Dialogue, taken from Holy Scripture«).²⁷ The *Bouclier* saw at least eighteen editions between the time of its initial publication and 1555, when De Brès published his response. To understand this latter response, it is necessary first of all to examine Grenier's own work. What points of Grenier's attack on the »Lutherans« had touched De Brès's theological sensitivities? In the *Bouclier*, Grenier had provided his readers with quotations from the church fathers in Latin, which he had also translated into French for the sake of his readership, for every point of doctrine that was in dispute between Rome and Reformation. The book had the form of a dialogue between Walker (»Le bien allant«) and Wanderer (»Le mal allant«), the first being an informed churchman and the other an erring spirit. The destiny of their long walk is Jerusalem – that is, Rome.

In order to counter this attack, De Brès decided to produce a better anthology of biblical and patristic quotations in French, which Protestant converts could read, memorize, and use in debate with parish priests or official inquisitors. To understand De Brès's mind, one must look at his choice of texts and quotes and their order, at the editorial lines he himself inserted between them, and

²⁶ Cf. the most recent work on editions of Augustine's works, Arnoud S.Q. Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation: The Flexibility of Intellectual Authority in Europe, 1500–1620*, Oxford 2011 (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology). For a similar notebook, which was perhaps used as a catalogue of a personal library, see Martin Bucer and Matthew Parker, *Florilegium patristicum*, in: Martini Bucer Opera Latina, vol. 3, ed. Pierre Fraenkel, Leiden 1988.

²⁷ Andrew Pettegree et al., *French Vernacular Books*, vol. 1, Leiden/Boston 2007, nos 23578 ff. See R.E. Hallmark, *Defenders of the Faith: The Case of Nicole Grenier*, in: *Renaissance Studies* 11/2 (1997), 123–140.

at the additions and the reorganization of material found in subsequent editions.

At the beginning of his dialogue, Grenier presented an alphabetical list of forty church fathers quoted in his book: »The names of the holy fathers and ancient doctors of the Church, whose sayings have been brought together in this book to confirm the articles of our faith contained therein – with the year in which they flourished or died in the Christian Church according to Trithemius in his *Book on the ecclesiastical writings*«. ²⁸ One entry in Grenier's list is the general »various famous councils of the Church in different times«. When Guy de Brès compiled his own book in response, he listed the fathers in chronological order, and added to their names a list of fourteen councils. The chronology begins with the author Dionysius the Areopagite (now commonly known as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, a fifth- and sixth-century Christian theologian and philosopher), whom De Brès regarded as the convert of St. Paul mentioned in Acts 17:34, and who is thought to have died in 96 CE. Dionysius's name is then followed by Clement of Rome, who lived at the end of the first century. But whereas the last father on Grenier's list is Pope Gregory I, De Brès went much further in time and also included references to Thomas Aquinas and Jean Gerson. The names and quotations were thus chosen to have the most impact on the adversary in the confessional debate.

In 1555, De Brès may not have been aware that another man had already written a response to Grenier's *Le bouclier de la foy*. The first edition of that response seems to have been published in Paris, with nearly the same title as that of Grenier's book: *Bouclier de la foy chrestienne de forme de dialogue*, written by Barthélemy Causse and published in 1554 by Vivant Gaulterot. ²⁹ Interestingly, Gaulterot himself had published ten editions of Grenier's *Le bouclier de la foy*, the first in 1547, the last in 1552. Of course, it is possible that the name of the editor and the place of publication for Causse's work were intentionally chosen as fakes. In fact, the second edition of Barthélemy Causse's book, which now bore the title *Le vray bouclier de la foy chrestienne*, appeared in Geneva in

²⁸ Nicole Grenier, *Le bouclier de la foy chrestienne*, Paris 1547. For the patristic facts he relied on Johannes Trithemius, *Liber de scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* (1531).

²⁹ Pettegree et al., *French Vernacular Books*, vol. 1, no 9459.

1557 from the presses of Jean Crespin, and in 1558 and onwards from the presses of Zacharie Durand.³⁰ There is one major difference between these two responses to Grenier's *Bouclier de la foy*. While Causse, like Grenier, cast his response in the form of a dialogue, De Brès compiled an anthology of quotations from the church fathers and organized them topically.³¹

5. Studies in Lausanne: Jeronime le Grand?

Even with the 1555 edition of *Le baston de la foy*, De Brès appears not to have considered himself a professional theologian, for he is reported to have travelled to Lausanne after the time of its publication. Apart from the testimonies discussed in the first section, no further sources have been found placing De Brès at Lausanne. The historian of the Reformation in the Pays de Vaud, Henri Vuilleumier, included the following entry in his list of students: »De Bray, Guy, de Mons, ancien boursier de LL. EE. de Lausanne«. ³² However, neither Karine Crousaz's research in the archives of Bern and Lausanne, nor her thorough study on the Academy of Lausanne, were able to corroborate this piece of information. No Guy de Brès or du Bray features in her lists of »extraordinary bursaries« for the period 1538–1560.³³ Yet there is one name in her list that may still link Guy de Brès to the academy. Listed as bursary recipient financed by the bailiff of Lausanne, there is a student who went by the name Jeronime le Grand.³⁴ He received financial aid for the academic years 1557–58 and 1558–59, which corresponds

³⁰ Pettegree et al., *French Vernacular Books*, vol. 1, no 9460–1.

³¹ On such sixteenth-century anthologies, see Anthony N.S. Lane, *Justification in Sixteenth-Century Patristic Anthologies*, in: *Auctoritas patrum: Contributions on the Reception of the Church Fathers in the 15th and 16th Century*, ed. Leif Grane et al., Mainz 1993 (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, Beiheft 73), 69–95, which lists a total of 22 other anthologies published until 1565.

³² Henri Vuilleumier, *Histoire de l'Église réformée du Pays de Vaud sous le régime Bernois*, vol. 4, Lausanne 1933, 523.

³³ Karine Crousaz, *L'Académie de Lausanne entre Humanisme et Réforme* (ca. 1538–1560), Leiden/Boston 2012 (*Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* 41), 518–527.

³⁴ Crousaz, *L'Académie de Lausanne*, 514.

precisely with the timeframe indicated by Crespin. Could this name be an alias for Guy de Brès?

In his later years, de Brès is known to have used the name Augustine du Mont, after the village of his birth, Mons or (in Dutch) Bergen.³⁵ Better known is the alias Jerom(m)e, which is mentioned in various depositions taken from interrogated witnesses.³⁶ While De Brès's use of the name Jerom(m)e is not well attested before 1561, it is entirely conceivable that Jerome or Jeronime – in Latin: Hieronymus – was the name by which Guy de Brès went about as one of the »heretical preachers« (*prescheurs hereticques*)³⁷ who was on the authorities' »most wanted« list. Moreover, De Brès is often described in various witness depositions as a man of »tall stature« (*hault de stature*).³⁸ When these details are put together, there is some ground for suggesting that Guy de Brès may have gone by the name of Jerome or Jeronime le Grand (i.e. the tall), and already used that name during the years of his exile and *per-egrinatio* in the German and Swiss territories.

Braekman suggests that Guy de Brès left Lausanne at the time of Theodore Beza's departure for Geneva, »and followed him to Geneva in the autumn of 1558«.³⁹ Tensions between Lausanne and the Council of Bern caused all ministers in the Classis of Lausanne, together with the professors of the Academy, to leave the city. However, Beza's teaching obligations only ended in November 1558.⁴⁰ The split between the ministers of the Pays de Vaud and the Council of Bern was finalized in the spring of 1559. In March 1559, a number of the ministers, among whom Barthélemy Cause, the author of *Le vray bouclier de la foy*, arrived in Geneva »to receive lodging until they are employed elsewhere«.⁴¹ To date,

³⁵ *Van Langenraad*, Guido de Bray, 15; Eduard Poullet, *Correspondance du Cardinal Granvelle 1565–1586*, vol. 2, Brussels 1877–1882, 353; Emile Braekman, *Guy de Brès*, vol. 1: *Sa vie*, Brussels 1960 (Collection Histoire du Protestantisme en Belgique et au Congo Belge 6), 61.

³⁶ *Van Langenraad*, Guido de Bray, 37–39, where he provides the testimony given by Gilles Espringalles of 15 November 1561 (Papiers d'Etat, Correspondence de Tournay, 1561–1563, 99r).

³⁷ *Van Langenraad*, Guido de Bray, 37.

³⁸ *Van Langenraad*, Guido de Bray, 39; cf. Braekman, *Guy de Brès*, 136.

³⁹ Braekman, *Les éditions du »Baston de la foy chrestienne«*, 323.

⁴⁰ Alain Dufour, *Théodore de Bèze: Poète et théologien*, Geneva 2006 (Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance 78), 59.

scholars have been unable to establish a special connection between Beza and De Brès. Nor do we know when the latter left Lausanne. Yet his contact with the Genevan team of publishers (Barbier and Courteau) may already have begun while he was still working in Lausanne.

Both the second and third editions of *Le baston de la foy* were published by Nicolas Barbier and Thomas Courteau in 1558, which Braekman has labeled BC 1558/1 and BC 1558/2, respectively.⁴² The second edition closely followed the *editio princeps*, and added some material here and there (e.g. on marriage, see below §9). The third edition shows a more extensive reorganization, and begins with three entirely new chapters. Chapter one is »On God and the properties attributed to Him by Holy Scripture« (p. 1–77), chapter two »On the properties of Christ« (p. 77–102), and chapter three »The properties of the Holy Spirit which are attributed to Him by Holy Scripture« (p. 102–112). The first chapter opens with a presentation of the knowledge of God »by inspiration of nature«, as well as an introduction to the testimonies from Holy Scripture which follow. This closely mirrors what De Brès would go on to write in article two of the Belgic Confession. The properties of God are presented by a multitude of quotations from the Old and New Testaments, some of which are taken from the apocryphal books. Chapter one closes with a discussion of the unity of God and the properties that distinguish the three Persons. This section mirrors much of what De Brès would write in article eight and nine of his confession.

It is especially the addition of these three chapters to *Le baston* late in 1558 which seems to reflect influence from Theodore Beza's *Confession de foi chrestienne*, which was composed in 1558 in Lausanne and appeared in 1559 in Geneva.⁴³ A striking feature is that Beza begins his confession with three chapters on Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a feature which De Brès introduced in the second

⁴¹ Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia, ed. Johann Wilhelm Baum et al., vol. 21, Braunschweig 1879 (Corpus Reformatorum 49), 712.

⁴² Braekman, Les éditions du »Baston de la foy chrestienne«, 315–345.

⁴³ Theodore Beza, *Confession de foy chrestienne*, [Geneva]: Conrad Badius, 1559, written in 1558, cf. Frédéric Gardy, *Bibliographie des œuvres théologiques, littéraires, historiques et juridiques de Théodore de Bèze*, Geneva 1960 (Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 41), 60.

revision of *Le baston* in 1558. The Lausanne connection thus suggests that there may at that time already have been contact between De Bèze and De Brès, perhaps in the setting of the classroom of that city's academy prior to Beza's move to Geneva.

6. Preparing for the »Confessio Belgica«?

What is true of Lausanne is even more so for Geneva: no documentation has been found in support of De Brès's reported presence in the city or at the academy there, which opened its doors in 1559. The only evidence linking the author of *Le baston de la foy* to Geneva is the publishing house of Nicolas Barbier and Thomas Courteau, from whose presses (as noted above) the two editions from 1558, as well as further editions from 1559, 1561, and 1565, all appeared. Yet when Crespin noted that De Brès wrote the first edition while in Ghent,⁴⁴ and then travelled to Lausanne and later also to Geneva, he did not comment on the later editions of *Le baston*.

Two editions of *Le baston*, the second and third, thus appeared in Geneva within the same year, 1558, and from the same publishing house of Nicolas Barbier and Thomas Courteau.⁴⁵ A fourth edition came out in 1559. Could it be that De Brès himself was in Geneva while these new editions were being prepared and printed? As described above, the most striking difference between the two revisions of 1558 is the addition of the three first chapters on the Trinity. Also the fourth edition of 1559 shows the addition of several chapters. The production of three revised editions, which emerged from the same publishing house, thus suggests an intense period of study on the part of Guy de Brès while he resided in the cities of Lausanne and Geneva.

⁴⁴ The title page has »A Lyon. Anno. 1555«, but this may have been chosen to divert the Roman Catholic authorities. Suggestions for the place of publication include Antwerp, while for the printer Christopher Plantin has been proposed (cf. *Braekman*, *Les éditions du »Baston de la foy chrestienne«*, 321–323).

⁴⁵ *Braekman*, *Les éditions du »Baston de la foy chrestienne«*, 323–327; *Gilmont*, *Nouveau bilan bibliographique*, 30, 32.

But why would De Brès have another publisher produce a new edition of his first theological work, rather than Jean Crespin? Crespin, a learned and equally zealous editor, was De Brès's first connection to Geneva. Although Crespin's name and printer's mark are not found on the editions of *Le baston de la foy*, it turns out that he himself was the connection between De Brès and his real publishers Barbier and Courteau. From 1554 to 1558 Crespin associated himself with Nicolas Barbier, a printer who had come from Lyon.⁴⁶ Crespin's bio-bibliographer, Jean-François Gilmont, described the importance of this association »between a printer-editor and a bookseller-editor« as follows.⁴⁷ While Crespin took care of the Latin editions, Barbier would publish the French translation of a work, as happened, for example, with John Calvin's lectures on the minor prophets (1559–60). In 1558 Barbier associated himself with Thomas Courteau from the Picardy province. Together this duo published works under their own name: »Chez N. Barbier et Th. Courteau«. These books included reprints from works which had earlier been published by Crespin. Barbier and Courteau also acquired two bestsellers of their own: the illustrated French Bible, and Guy de Brès's *Le baston de la foy*.⁴⁸ It is possible that the acquisition of *Le baston* gave the Barbier-Courteau team a certain amount of independence. Whatever the case may have been, apart from the Genevan editions of *Le baston* there are no other historical data placing De Brès in that city.

Guy de Brès's marriage to Catharine Ramon is commonly used in order to establish a *terminus ad quem* for his stay in Geneva. Since the birth of their first son, Israel, dates to 31 August 1560,⁴⁹ this suggests that their marriage took place at the very latest in November 1559. This in turn corresponds with De Brès's remark in his farewell letter to his wife that »it pleased our good God to

⁴⁶ On Nicolas Barbier, see Hans Joachim *Bremme*, *Buchdrucker und Buchändler zur Zeit der Glaubenskämpfe: Studien zur Genfer Druckgeschichte 1565–1580*, Geneva 1969 (*Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 104), 108f.; on Thomas Courteau see *Bremme*, *Buchdrucker*, 144f.

⁴⁷ *Gilmont*, Jean Crespin, 91.

⁴⁸ *Gilmont*, Jean Crespin, 93.

⁴⁹ *Van Langeraad*, Guido de Bray, 97–103; Nicolaas H. *Gootjes*, *The Belgic Confession: Its History and Sources*, Grand Rapids, MI 2007 (*Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought*), 43–46.

allow us to live together for the time span of some seven years«. Their marriage was blessed with five children.⁵⁰ But where and when Guy and Catharine met remains unknown.

It is fair to assume that there may be a connection between De Brès's continuing work on *Le baston* until the 1561 edition, and his writing of *Le confession de foy* in 1561. Did he already contemplate the possibility of such a confession when he was in Geneva? A century later, Martinus Schoock stated on the basis of specific documents which are nevertheless unknown to us:

»Already in the year 1559 Guido de Brès, a most faithful man (verily, as earlier he had opened up, he has sealed the truth of the Gospel by his blood), foremost because the raving Anabaptists were regarded as being on the same page as the Orthodox by the inquisitors, started to draw up some articles of the orthodox unanimity.«⁵¹

Schoock did not specify what his documentary basis for this claim was, and it has since been rejected by Van Langeraad and Gootjes.⁵² It is quite possible that Schoock mistook De Brès's continuing work on *Le baston*, especially during his time in Geneva, for his work on a confession. *Le baston*, »which has been faithfully derived from the very books of the ancient teachers«, is preceded by the dedicatory epistle to the church of L[jille]. The author wrote: »When I offer the present book (in which nothing is from me, but everything from the Fathers) as a confession of my faith (*pour confession de ma foy*) to the enemies of the Fathers, I do not doubt that one day I will be condemned as a wicked heretic to be burned alive to ashes«.⁵³

Even if Schoock confused De Brès's work on *Le Baston* with his preparations for the confession, his mention of the year 1559 calls to mind the drafting of the *Confession de Paris*, for which John Calvin in Geneva was asked to send a contribution that year.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *De Brès*, Procedures tenues, in: *Pijper*, Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica, vol. 8, 624; *Braekman*, Guy de Bres, vol 1: Sa vie, 118.

⁵¹ Marten Schoock, *Liber de bonis vulgo ecclesiasticis dictis*, Groningen: Nicolai, 1651, 519–522, printed also in *Van Langeraad*, Guido de Bray, 97f.; *Gootjes*, The Belgic Confession, 213 f.

⁵² *Van Langeraad*, Guido de Bray, 47.

⁵³ *De Brès*, *Le baston de la foy* (1555), 7.

⁵⁴ See Erik A. de Boer, *Confession de Foy, faite d'un commun accord par les Fran-*

After all, it is possible that De Brès was in Geneva during those days and became aware of the need for a confession for the Reformed churches in the Netherlands as they lived under Spanish rule. In that sense, his continuing work on *Le baston* can be regarded as his preparation (albeit perhaps unconscious) for the composition of the *Confessio Belgica*.

7. Vir trilinguis

Having upgraded his theological skills in Lausanne and Geneva, De Brès returned to active duty and served as itinerant preacher to several congregations in northern France and the southern Low Countries. Although some ten other editions of *Le baston* would later appear, no substantial further revision took place in any of them. To assess De Brès's theological development it may be worthwhile first to depict him as he was at the end of his life, as a mature theologian. The very last documents testifying to De Brès's patristic learning are found in the letters he wrote from prison to his flock in Valenciennes. Two long letters read as a verbal report of the interrogation carried out on 16 and 17 May 1567 by a Franciscan monk, and on 22 May by the bishop of Arras, François Richardot.

Although he apparently had no reference books available to him, Guy de Brès was able to dispute detailed points of doctrine and to quote from memory. He refers expressly to the *De cura pro mortuis agenda* of Augustine, where the church father speaks of his mother Monica's inability to help him after her death.⁵⁵ Another point: »How the doctors of the Church are united, consecrating bread and wine against the bearing of the words of the Lord Jesus, one can see in the words of Scholasticus, who made a canon and lived around the time of Gregory.«⁵⁶ This is followed by a discus-

çois qui desirent vivre selon la pureté de l'Évangile de nostre Seigneur Iesu-Christ – 1559, in: *Confessies: Gereformeerde geloofsverantwoording in zestiende-eeuws Europa*, ed. M. te Velde, Heerenveen 2009, 353–394.

⁵⁵ *De Brès*, *Procédures tenues*, in *Pijper*, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, vol. 8, 503.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 509

sion of the meaning of the Latin and Greek terms, with reference to Erasmus's *Annotationes*. Also Peter Lombard and Peter Comes-ter, John Duns Scotus (»in sententia II, lib. 4, quest. 3«) and Gabriel Biel (*In canone missae*, lect. 40) are referred to. There is thus good reason to trace De Brès's references and to investigate his quotes from the fathers and doctors of the church. After all, a comparison with his »database«, *Le baston de la foy*, may provide insight into the development of his learning.

The texts of the interrogations, published shortly after Guy de Brès and his colleague Pérégrin de la Grange were executed, remind us of the confiscation of De Brès's papers in 1561. When the Reformed citizens of Doornik publicly protested by marching through the streets while singing Psalms (*les chanteries*), the governess Margaret of Parma sent a committee to the city to investigate these events. The committee reported to the governess that a bundle of papers had been thrown over the castle wall, containing a letter and a confession. Concerning this letter they report: »Finally, they quote several lines in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, taken from Scripture.«⁵⁷ Thus, the end of the letter which accompanied the Belgian Confession as an introduction ended with quotations taken from the Bible in the three languages of the original Scriptures and the ecclesiastical translation. When the confiscated letters were compared, the following investigation proved that the handwriting of the letter accompanying the confession was that of Guy de Brès. The Bible verses in the three languages were therefore also in his handwriting. That he could write in these languages should not surprise us, because the inventory of confiscated books mentions various books »in French and in Latin, with some books in Greek«.⁵⁸

Crespin reported that Guy de Brès had travelled to Lausanne and Geneva in 1557–1558 »to learn Latin« (and, perhaps, the biblical languages). Only four years later, in 1561, the man who wrote the famous *Confession de foy* appears to have had a working knowledge of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages. After his return from Geneva, De Brès adopted a false name for his

⁵⁷ The text of this report from 2 November 1561 is included in: *Gootjes*, *The Belgian Confession*, 191.

⁵⁸ *Gootjes*, *The Belgian Confession*, 15, 50, 197.

ministry in visiting the towns and villages of south-west Belgium. That name was Jerome. This was also the name of one of his brothers. But could De Brès also have decided upon it in an allusion to »Hierosme, prestre docteur Latin (†422)«, who is listed as one of his sources and authorities in *Le baston de la foy*? Hieronymus, or Jerome, was after all the true *vir trilinguis*, the great church father and biblical scholar who learned the biblical languages and composed the Vulgate.⁵⁹ The very fact that, contrary to the other preachers of the southern Low Countries, Guy de Brès is not known to have followed any ecclesiastical or academic formation before his turn to the Reformed cause, lends credence to the reports of his »peregrinatio academica« to Lausanne and Geneva and of his pursuit to study languages there⁶⁰.

8. Towards a critical edition

The development of Guy de Brès's *Le baston de la foy chrestienne* has never been studied in depth. A critical edition is now being prepared by the present author in cooperation with W.H.Th. Moehn and A.J. Kunz. This team intends to produce a digital edition (a) comparing the first edition and the Genevan editions of 1558/1–2, 1559, 1561, and 1565, (b) compiling a database of the church fathers, councils, and canons quoted, and (c) providing source references to sixteenth-century and modern editions. On the basis of this research, solutions may be found to answer the question how De Brès acquired his patristic expertise over the years.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Cf. the telling title of Dennis Brown, *Vir trilinguis: A Study in the Biblical Exegesis of Saint Jerome*, Kampen 1992.

⁶⁰ On his teachers in polemic against the Anabaptists he wrote: »Je ne veux taire aussi que je me suis grandement servi en cette oeuvre du labour des saints personnages qui ont écrit contre ceste secte de notre temps, comme de ce grand serviteur de Dieu, feu de bonne et heureuse mémoire Maître Jean Calvin, Jean Alasko, Henri Bullinger, Martin Micron, à la moisson desquels j'ai comme recueillie les épis après eux, pour servir aussi selon mon petit pouvoir à notre Seigneur, m'employant allègrement à offrir ce peu que je puis« (Guy de Brès, *La racine, source et fondement des anabaptistes ou rebaptisez de nostre temps. Avec tresample refutation des arguments principaux, par lesquels ils ont accoustumé de troubler l'Eglise de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, et seduire les simples. Le tout reduict en trois livres*, [Rouen]: Abel Clémence, 1565, 4).

⁶¹ Samples of such research can be found in Erik A. *de Boer*, *The Articles on Scrip-*

There is one intriguing question in particular that begs for an answer: if De Brès had no command of Latin when he wrote his French language anthology in 1555, where did he find all these translated quotations? One of the earliest patristic anthologies, the *Unio dissidentium* by Hermannus Bodius (1527), had already been published in French translation in 1527–1528 by Martin Lempereur in Antwerp: *L'Union de toutes discordes, qui est un livre tres utile à tous amateurs de paix et de unité, extraict des principaulx docteurs de l'eglise chrestienne*.⁶² Further editions we have been able to identify were published by Pierre de Vingle (1533), Jean Michel (1539), and Philibert Hamelin (1551) in Geneva. De Brès's work resembles that of Bodius in at least one important respect: every passage within a chapter begins with several quotes from Scripture on the doctrinal or ethical theme, followed by quotations from church fathers, using the systems of division found in the Latin editions of the sixteenth century.

Other sources of patristic facts and quotes can be identified by a careful reading of De Brès's texts. The following, concluding part of this essay provides a sample from our quest to track down the sources of De Brès's early knowledge of the *patres*.

9. A sample: De Brès on marriage

For the purposes of this article, we have chosen one of the smaller chapters in *Le baston* to illustrate our quest for its sources. The choice is as such random, although the theme ties in nicely with the story of De Brès's life. As we saw, after he left Geneva and headed

ture in the *Confessio Belgica* and in »Le baston de la foy chrestienne«, in: Beck et al., *The Belgic Confession at 450, 105–122*; Erik de Boer, *Meester in de martial arts: De Bres' gebruik van de patres in »Le baston« en de »Confessio Belgica« over de doop*, in: *Geloofstaal trekt haar spoor: 450 Jaar Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis*, ed. Frank van der Pol, Utrecht 2012, 153–161; Erik A. de Boer, *Het offer van het lam: Het schriftberoep van Guido de Bres in artikel 34 van de Nederlandse geloofsbelijdenis*, in: *van der Pol, Geloofstaal trekt haar spoor, 162–172*; Erik A. de Boer, *De katholieke ecclesiologie van de »Confessio Belgica« in het licht van »Le baston de la foy«*, in: *Theologia Reformata* 55/3 (2012), 264–277.

⁶² For a description of the early editions, see Francis M. Higman, *Piety and the People: Religious Printing in French, 1511–1551*, Aldershot 1996 (St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History), nos. B 211–216.

for home, he married Catharine Ramon. So what were his thoughts on the marriage of a pastor or priest? De Brès chose to write on the topic of marriage when he was still a bachelor, and he treated it in a chapter entitled »Du mariage et des vo[e]ux« (1555, f. 128v–134v), although it is in fact followed by a distinct chapter on vows. The second edition corrected this error in the title (1558/1, p. 212). The quotation of Bible verses on marriage in the first edition was restricted to 1 Timothy 4:1–3 and Matthew 19:4–6, cited at the beginning of the chapter. In the margin De Brès also added references to Genesis 1 and 2, to Ephesians 5, and to 1 Corinthians 6. Later on in this chapter he also supplied long quotations from 1 Corinthians 7.

In the second edition, ten quotations – two from Genesis, and eight from the New Testament – are brought together and printed in full at the beginning of the chapter. Four later references from the 1555 edition are deleted in the 1558/1 edition. That section had originally read:

- »Solomon describes the praise of marriage, Proverbs 18.
- David describes God's blessing of married people, Psalm 128.
- The angel Raphael teaches Tobias how he should marry according to God[']s command].
- The confirmation of marriage is found in Genesis 9« (f. 129v).

Having deleted these lines, De Brès also reordered his quotations from the church fathers. In the second revision which he undertook in 1558, he pushed the chapters on marriage, vows, and fasting towards the end of the book. The contents of the chapter on marriage, however, remained the same (1558/2, p. 402–409). After the second revision of 1558, the place and contents of this chapter were not revised again (1559–1565).

Having described the process of redaction in the chapter on marriage across the first editions of *Le Baston*, we now turn to examine the contents of the patristic quotations. The chapter constitutes a powerful defence of marriage, also for those who serve in the ministry of the Word. From Eusebius's *Histoire ecclesiastique*, De Brès used a passage from Clement of Alexandria on the apostles who travelled with their spouses. He further reads St. Paul's address to his *suzugos* in Philippians 4 as a reference to his wife.⁶³

At two points De Brès introduces a quotation, and both times his text can easily be traced back to the French translation of Eusebius's *Histoire ecclésiastique* in the edition from Martin Lempereur (Merten de Keyser).⁶⁴

The passage on the married apostles is followed by a reference to »Au quart des sentences« (i.e. book four of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*) which shows itself to have been taken and copied from a marginal reference in Calvin's *Institution de la religion chrestienne*.⁶⁵

An examination of the remaining references reveals that De Brès further used three historical works:

- The *Historia tripartita*, which is a sixth-century compilation by Cassiodorus of the three church histories of Eusebius, Sozomen, and Theodoret from the fourth and fifth century.
- His source for the life of Sylvester I (pope, 314–335) is Bartolomeus Platina (Bartolomeo Sacchi, 1421–1481), *Liber de vita Christi et omnium pontificum*.⁶⁶
- The chapter on marriage closes with a quotation from the work of the historiographer Jean le Maire de Belges, *Traicté de la différence des schismes et des conciles de l'Église*.⁶⁷

The *Historia tripartita* was not translated into French until 1578. However, Eusebius's *Histoire ecclésiastique* in French translation was published in 1532, with editions produced in Antwerp by

⁶³ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* III 30.1; *De Brès*, *Le baston de la foy* (1555), 129v–130r.

⁶⁴ Eusebius, *L'histoire ecclésiastique* (transl. Claude de Seyssel), Antwerp 1533, 76r (book III, chapter xxvii as indicated also in *De Brès*, *Le baston de la foy* [1555], 129v).

⁶⁵ *De Brès*, *Le baston de la foy* (1555), 130r: »Au quart des sentences, distinction 17, Chapi[tre] 4 et au decret 27, question 2, Chapi[tre] qui se commence ›Cum societas‹; cf. Jean Calvin, *Institution de la religion chrétienne* (1541), ed. Olivier Millet, Geneva 2008 (Textes littéraires français 598), 1476: »au quart des sen. Dist. 27 c. 4 et au decret 27 c. 2 c. Cum societas«.

⁶⁶ Modern edition: Bartolomeo Platina, *Liber de vita Christi et omnium pontificum*, ed. Giacinto Gaida, Città di Castello 1913–1932.

⁶⁷ Modern edition: Jean Lemaire de Belges, *Traicté de la différence des schismes et des conciles de l'Église avec l'Histoire du Prince Sophy et autres oeuvres*, ed. Jennifer Britnell, Geneva 1997 (Textes littéraires français), 170; also p. 237 (»roy Loys le Besque«); cf. *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. Giovanni Domenico Mansi, vol. 18, 121f. For a description of the editions of the »Traicté«, printed from 1511 to 1549, see *Lemaire de Belges*, *Traicté*, ed. Jennifer Britnell, 58–69.

Merten de Keyser (1533), who also published Bodius's *L'union de toutes discordes*, and in Paris by Vivant Gaulterot (1540), the publisher of De Brès's antagonist Nicole Grenier.⁶⁸ The work of Platina was published in French as *Les vies, faictz et gestes des sainctz peres papes, empereurs et roys de France*, and saw many editions between 1540 and 1551 produced in Paris.⁶⁹

An intriguing reference, already found in the first edition of 1555, is the very last one to »St. Uldaric, bishop of Augsburg, in the letter which he sent to Nicolas I regarding the prohibition on marriage for priests«. Ulrich of Augsburg, however, lived from c. 890 to 973, whereas pope Nicolas I lived from c. 820 to 867. The first thus cannot have addressed a letter to the second, who had died decades before his birth. De Brès quoted at some length from this letter in which Ulrich, as he understood it, reproached the pope for prohibiting marriage for the clergy since it went »completely against the Word of God, the decisions of the Council of Nicaea, and the ancient church«. The author tells the story of Pope Gregory I who was forced to change his mind on the matter. For, on a fishing trip he is said to have seen six thousands heads of little children, tossed into the river after their illegitimate birth. The shock of this event caused Gregory to change his mind and to permit his priests to marry. De Brès brings this »coup de grâce« of his argument to a close as follows: »This Epistle has been found in a library in a town in Holland called Aldwater«⁷⁰. The *Epistola divi Hulderichi Augustinensis Episcopi, adversus constitutionem de Cleri Coelibatum, plane referens Apostolicum Spiritum* had been published in Wittenberg in 1520, with a preface by Martin Luther.⁷¹ At the end of the pamphlet, we also find the very same line on the origin of the manuscript, which De Brès quoted in French in *Le Baston*.⁷² Apparently he was struck by the thought

⁶⁸ Pettegree et al., French Vernacular Books, vol. 1, 566.

⁶⁹ Pettegree et al., French Vernacular Books, vol. 2, 573–574.

⁷⁰ *De Brès*, *Le baston de la foy* (1555), 134r-v.

⁷¹ D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe), Briefwechsel vol. 12, no. 4217, 22 (n. 2).

⁷² »Inventa est haec Epistola, in quadam Bibliotheca opidi veteris aquae Germanicae Aldwater in Hollandia Inferioris Germaniae provincia« (Epistola divi Hulderichi Augustinensis Episcopi, adversus constitutionem de Cleri Coelibatum, plane referens Apostolicum Spiritum [Wittenberg 1520], f. Aiiii v). Aldwater seems to refer to Aduard

that this pamphlet could be verified as »ex antiqua codice excerpta« (as Luther had said in his preface) from somewhere in the Low Countries.

Whether De Brès used the Wittenberg edition or found a French translation elsewhere is not known, but the contents of the pamphlet in any case feature throughout his chapter on marriage in *Le Baston*. The following facts from early church history are found both in the pamphlet as well as in De Brès's chapter on marriage: the reference to Pope Sylvester, and another to the second book of the *Historia tripartita* (on the decision of the Council of Nicaea forbidding priests to marry, and the forceful reaction of Paphnutius, bishop of Egypt). The account regarding Pope Gregory I and his shock upon seeing so many dead babies ends in *Le baston* with the following words: »The Apostle said: It is better to marry than to burn. And I for my part say: it is better to marry than to create a reason for murdering« (illegitimate children). The same lines are found in the same place in the *Epistola*.⁷³

In the short chapter on marriage, we thus find evidence for De Brès using four French language sources on theology and history: Calvin's *Institution de la religion chrestienne*, Jean le Maire's *Traicté*, the translation of Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica*, and Platina's *Les vies*. The quest to uncover De Brès's sources continues, however. One important question, especially relevant for the 1555 edition of *Le baston*, is this: does Crespin's remark that De Brès went to Lausanne and Geneva in order to study Latin imply that he knew no Latin prior to that time, and therefore had to rely on French language sources? If this was indeed the case, he must have used intermediate sources which provided him with French language quotes from books that had only been published in Latin. Comparison of the further editions of *Le baston* may allow us to uncover whether De Brès learned to handle Latin sources, or else

(close to Groningen) with its Benedictine abbey. I thank Wim Moehn for identifying this reference to the »Epistola«.

⁷³ »L'Apostre a dit, il vaut mieux se marier que brusler; et je dy aussi de ma part, qu'il vaut mieux se marier, que bailler occasion de mort« (*De Brès*, *Le baston de la foy* [1555], 134r). Cf. »Apostolicum illud laudavit consilium: Melius est nubere quam uri; addens ex sui parte: Melius est nubere quem mortis occasionem prebere« (*Epistola divi Hulderichi* [...], f. Aiiir).

relied on quotations which he found in other standard reference works.

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Abstract: Guy de Brès, who would become the author of the »Confessio Belgica«, published his first work in 1555, »Le baston de la foy chrestienne«, a florilegium of quotes from the Bible and the Church Fathers, that was intended as a guide for the faithful who were engaged in dispute over Reformed doctrine. De Brès, a preacher in the South of the Low Countries, travelled to Lausanne and Geneva (1556–1559) to further study theology and improve his Latin. The connection between his studies at both institutions, his work on three more editions of his book, and the sources of his patristic knowledge are discussed. A critical edition of his work, that preceded the composition of the Belgic Confession, is being prepared.

Keywords: Guy de Brès, Théodore de Bèze, Jean Calvin, Confessio Belgica, Académie de Lausanne, Académie de Genève