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Religious Persecution and Transnational Compassion in the Dutch Vernacular Press 1655-1745

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Chapter 2

Mirrors of Past and Present: Framing a Massacre

If tragic matter is what poets seek,
To adorn their pompous plays
Let them go to Savoy's garden bleak,
Where upon martyrs' blood they'll gaze.

- Joannes Six van Chandelier, 'Savooische tyrannye' (1655)²⁷⁵

In 1656, Haarlem painter and publisher Pieter Casteleyn (1618–76) published the sixth edition of his popular almanac *Hollandse Mercurius* (*Hollander Mercury*), providing a 150-page-long overview of what he considered to have been the most important news of 1655. As in all other editions, the frontispiece gives readers a glimpse of some of the most important events of the past year through a series of original prints, crafted by the author himself.²⁷⁶ Below an image showing the coronation of Pope Alexander VII, two prints seem to depict the burning of Waldensian villages in the valleys of Piedmont. Casteleyn arouses his readers' curiosity without giving away too many details. In the first image's left corner, we see a lone man walking away from the flames. In the other one, nothing but the fire itself suggests some form of human presence.²⁷⁷ Only the mountainous surroundings help to somewhat pinpoint the destruction on Europe's map. Other than that, the images are a blank slate, devoid of context. We see no human suffering, no political symbols to identify victim or perpetrator, and no signs of confessional animosity. One would almost think that the printmaker felt insecure about the

²⁷⁵ 'Soekt poësy nu treurens stof, om die hooghdraavende op te tooijen? Sy volge my naa 't bloedend hof, van martelaaren, in Savooijen', J. Six van Chandelier, 'Savooische tyrannye', (1655), in A.E. Jacobs (ed.), *J. Six van Chandelier. Gedichten* (Assen, 1991), pp. 712–716.

²⁷⁶ G. Verhoeven and S. van der Veen, *De Hollandse Mercurius. Een Haarlems jaarboek uit de zeventiende eeuw* (Haarlem, 2011), p. 39.

²⁷⁷ P. Casteleyn, *Hollandse Mercurius, bebelzende 't geen aenmerckens waerdigh in Europa, en voornamelyck in 't stuck van Oorloch en Vrede 't gantze Jaer 1655 voorgefallen is* (Haarlem, 1656).

details of the Piedmont Easter and cautiously left out visualizations of information that he could not verify.

The abstracted visualization of the massacre and its aftermath contrasts sharply with the textual accounts provided by the author. In the fourteen pages devoted to events in Piedmont, Casteleyn connects an impressive number of official documents, public accounts, and works of diplomatic correspondence to sharp statements about the nature of the violence. At the very start of the account, the *Hollandse Mercurius* claims that the massacre had been orchestrated by the Jesuits.²⁷⁸ Casteleyn provides a precise body count of 2278, found by a preacher who had returned from hiding in the mountains to bury the dead as ‘sad relics of Christian love to their fellows and a bad encouragement for Jews and heathens to become Roman Christians’.²⁷⁹

Discussing some of the reactions to the massacre throughout Europe, Casteleyn shows how it stirred up old confessional animosities. Quoting what is probably an excerpt from a newspaper from the Southern Netherlands he asserts that the Brabanters mocked the attempts of Protestants to help rebellious peasants and claimed that the Lord Protector strived to become the ‘universal chief of all sectarians and heretics throughout the different parts of Christendom’.²⁸⁰ The almanac describes how in the small Catholic canton of Schwyz about forty Catholics, among whom were several noblemen, renounced their faith upon hearing about the cruelties in the valleys of Piedmont and converted to the Mennonite and Reformed religions.²⁸¹ Casteleyn observed that Switzerland quickly lapsed into confessional violence after the Reformed cantons began to intercede in Piedmont.²⁸² Indeed, the *Hollandse Mercurius* concluded that the Piedmont Easter was an ‘eternal stain for the Catholics of our century’.²⁸³

In short, the almanac provided an account of events in which Europe’s confessional divide took center stage—probably counting on little appreciation by Catholic readers. To some extent, such a confessional perception of the Piedmont Easter was inevitable. After all,

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

²⁷⁹ ‘[...] jammerlijcke Reliquien van Christenen liefde aen hun even naesten / en slechte aenlockselen voor Joden en Heydenen om Rooms Christen te worden’; *ibid.*, p. 128.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

the violence was ordered by a Catholic prince, carried out by Catholic soldiers, and directed against a Reformed minority, who could have averted their fate by converting. Yet Casteleyn went further by universalizing the conflict with confessional truth claims. Through the lens of massacre, the author offered a perspective of Europe's social and political landscape along hostile confessional lines.

Casteleyn's perception of events contrasts sharply with the characterization of the international impact of the conflict in recent historiography, which has stressed a confessionally neutral perception of events. David Trim has suggested that the reaction of the Commonwealth of England to the Piedmont Easter was an early example of government policy that was legitimized with reference to humanitarian principles. According to Philippe Rosenberg, Protestant polemic began to shift in the second half of the seventeenth century 'from martyrology to humanitarianism'.²⁸⁴ Although Cromwell effectively aided coreligionists, they argue, the language used to justify this was not religiously specific. The massacre was communicated as unjustifiable because it was inhumane.²⁸⁵ In other words, Trim and Rosenberg suggest that the normative principle of humanity replaced the normative principle of religion. This raises the question as to how we should interpret Casteleyn's perception of events. Are we confronted here with two different discursive spheres—one Dutch, the other English—, the latter a step further in the turn to secularism than the other?

In Chapter 1, we have seen how polemic about the Waldensian massacre was strategically produced to meet an international normative principle regarding loyalty and domestic sovereignty. This chapter shifts attention from the practices to the discourse of public diplomacy. It asks, first, how the Waldensians tried to convince their international audience that the violence they had suffered was unjust. Second, I will examine how Dutch pamphleteers appropriated the news of the massacre to tell their own versions of the story. In doing so, this chapter sheds light on the strategic deployment of confessional and secular political discourse in printed news media in the mid-seventeenth century. It will be argued that rather than seeing shifts in polemic, we should distinguish between different kinds of Protestant polemic and respective strategies of argumentation used by various commentators.

²⁸⁴ Trim, "If a prince use tyrannie", p. 38.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 64–65.

Beyond Legal Boundaries

When the Waldensian minister Jean Léger took up his pen to inform the world about the tragedy that had befallen him and his people, he had to reckon with the fact that nowhere in Europe existed full freedom of religion. Adhering to a confession other than the one dominant in the state in which one lived always entailed at least some degree of discrimination. This way of ordering society found virtually universal acceptance. Of course, almost all religious minorities believed that—as members of the true faith—their being discriminated against was uncalled for. Yet there were few people who would argue that princes or states should not politically favor one confession over another, or not curtail anyone for religious dissidence. That the Waldensians were tolerated only within the limits of a set number of valleys in Piedmont may have saddened Protestants throughout Europe, but few would have considered it an outrage.

Religious tolerance and discrimination took form first and foremost in the everyday coexistence between common people as they went about their daily lives. As Benjamin Kaplan reminds us, even during the wars of religion, interconfessional violence remained an anomaly rather than a rule.²⁸⁶ Yet in the second half of the sixteenth century the experience of violence led rulers to regulate the confessional divisions within their states through new laws in the form of peace treaties. These religious peace treaties were not the products of a shared value of toleration.²⁸⁷ On the contrary, most legal settlements that ended the individual wars of religion were grudgingly devised as provisional necessities after military impasse. They were pragmatic and highly experimental settlements which were temporary solutions until a long-term ideal of religious unity could once again be attained.²⁸⁸

This gave religious peace treaties a somewhat paradoxical nature. On the one hand, they did not employ a language of justice—Randall Lesaffer argues that this was, in fact, the case for early modern treaties in general. They did, however, provide a legal framework for both

²⁸⁶ Kaplan, *Divided by faith*, pp. 76, 237–265.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8; R. Po–Chia Hsia, 'Introduction', in R. Po–Chia Hsia and H. van Nierop (eds.), *Calvinism and religious toleration in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 2–4.

²⁸⁸ Te Brake, *Religious war*, pp. 7–8.

parties to fall back on.²⁸⁹ As such, religious peace treaties had significant normative value. Early modern people were used to mining the past when searching for legitimacy. They drew heavily on historical settlements when negotiating social order and justice.²⁹⁰ Privileges, edicts, and treaties formed society's customary legal blueprints. Indeed, in many parts of Europe, authority itself was imagined to derive from contracts.²⁹¹ Individuals, groups, or third parties could be unhappy with the terms of a given settlement—as we have seen in Chapter 1 with the 1655 Patent of Grace—but would not be quick to question its overall validity as long as they believed or accepted that it had been drawn up by mutual consent.²⁹² In the words of Saliha Belmessous, treaties played a crucial role in 'construct[ing] legitimacy from actual power'.²⁹³

In the case of the Waldensians, finding a legal foothold for their cause was a difficult undertaking. Indeed, the religious peace treaty most commonly associated with the Waldensians, the 1561 Peace of Cavour, provides a compelling example of the ambiguity of early modern religious peace.²⁹⁴ Issued after Emmanuel Filibert (1528-1580) could no longer finance his war of attrition against a guerilla enemy that had the high ground in their native Alps, the Peace of Cavour was the typical half-hearted product of a military stalemate.²⁹⁵ Unlike the religious peace settlements issued around the same time in France and Germany, however, the creation of the Peace of Cavour remains shrouded in mystery. It appears that the document was a draft settlement, drawn up and signed by a ducal representative and four Waldensian pastors. It should have been—but probably never was—formalized in an actual edict of toleration promulgated by the Duke of Savoy.²⁹⁶

²⁸⁹ R. Lesaffer, 'Gentili's *ius post bellum* and early-modern peace treaties', in B. Kingsbury and B. Straumann (eds.), *The Roman foundations of the law of nations. Alberto Gentili and the justice of empire* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 24–25.

²⁹⁰ Pollmann, *Memory in early modern Europe*, p. 1.

²⁹¹ L. Schorn-Schütte, 'Confessional peace as a political and legal problem in the early modern period', in G. Hellmann (ed.), *Justice and peace. Interdisciplinary perspectives on a contested relationship* (Frankfurt and New York, 2013), p. 107.

²⁹² For early modern conceptions of 'consensualism' and treaty-making see R. Lesaffer, 'The medieval canon law of contract and early modern treaty law', *Journal of the History of International Law* 2–2 (2000), pp. 178–198.

²⁹³ S. Belmessous, 'The paradox of an empire by treaty', in S. Belmessous (ed.), *Empire by treaty. Negotiating European expansion, 1600–1900* (Oxford, 2015), p. 12.

²⁹⁴ See Chapter 1 for an introduction to the Treaty of Cavour.

²⁹⁵ Zwiwerlein, *Discorso und Lex*, pp. 363–364.

²⁹⁶ R. De Simone, 'La Pace di Cavour e l'Editto 1° di San Germano nella storia della tolleranza religiosa', *Bollettino della Società di studi Valdesi* 110 (1961), pp. 40–41.

It is therefore impossible to determine whether the Peace of Cavour, the very document that first differentiated between religious dissidence and rebellion in the Duchy of Savoy, was juridically speaking a treaty or an edict.²⁹⁷ It lacked, for instance, the clauses of amnesty and perpetuity which were part and parcel of early modern treaties.²⁹⁸ Although designed to transform the Waldensians from a foreign body that needed to be extirpated into a discriminate group of subjects with a geographically bounded legal status—at least for the time being—the Peace of Cavour thus remained a rather elusive document. In the decades after Cavour, the legal relation between the Waldensians and the court of Savoy would become ever more complex. Demographic realities soon began to put pressure on the arrangements of 1561. As the Waldensian communities prospered and grew they began to feel cramped in the nine valleys allotted to them, leading them to work lands and buy estates beyond these.²⁹⁹ Whether the Cavour settlement permitted this was controversial: Articles 20 and 21 allowed the Waldensians to purchase houses outside of the valleys, but they were not allowed to permanently live and preach there.³⁰⁰

Before 1655 Savoyard policy swung back and forth between chasing the Reformed from ‘forbidden’ areas and leaving them be.³⁰¹ In April 1603 a Waldensian committee successfully petitioned the Duke of Savoy to reconfirm the valleys that were tolerated.³⁰² In 1633, by contrast, the Duke for the first time expressly forbade the Waldensians from owning property outside the tolerated valleys, thereby breaking with the Cavour settlement.³⁰³ In 1637, 1641, 1650, and 1653 the duke issued similar decrees, which were, however, barely enforced. Moreover, in December 1653—five months after the last restriction—the Waldensians again successfully petitioned Charles Emmanuel II to reconfirm the concessions granted in 1603 in

²⁹⁷ Zwielerlein, *Discorso und Lex*, p. 370.

²⁹⁸ Lesaffer, ‘Peace treaties’, pp. 85, 89.

²⁹⁹ Balmas and Zardini Lana, *Vera relazione*, p. 17.

³⁰⁰ Zwielerlein, *Discorso und Lex*, p. 371.

³⁰¹ Most notably, around 1620 the Waldensians were heavily persecuted in the Marquisate of Saluzzo. See M. Battistoni, ‘Reshaping local public space. Religion and politics in the marquisate of Saluzzo between Reformation and Counter-Reformation’, in M.A. Vester (ed.), *Sabaudian studies. Political culture, dynasty, and territory, 1400–1700* (Kirksville, MO, 2013), pp. 240–258.

³⁰² For a transcription of the petition and the grant see W. Gilly, *Narrative of an excursion to the mountains of Piedmont in the Year MDCCCXXIII and researches among the Vaudois, or Waldenses, Protestant Inhabitants of the Cottian Alps* (London, 1825), pp. xxix–xxxii.

³⁰³ Balmas and Zardini Lana, *Vera relazione*, p. 19.

exchange for a fee.³⁰⁴ In short, the Order of Gastaldo from January 1655, which once again ordered the Waldensians to leave the valleys outside the limits of toleration, was not unprecedented. That an army was suddenly sent to the valleys to enforce the order must have, however, come as an unpleasant surprise.

Although the legal status of the Waldensian settlements was thus ambiguous—if not outright confusing—it had for some decades been relatively stable in practical terms; the Waldensians had probably become used to being presented with the same prohibitions every few years, while their successful petitions against them had become a ritual negotiation of conflict. It was a repetitive play of disunion and reconciliation that confirmed and stabilized the relationship with the duke, who demonstrated that the Waldensians could not only rely on presumed privileges, but remained dependent on his mercy.

After the breakdown of this *modus vivendi* and the subsequent massacre both the Waldensians and the court of Savoy elaborated on the legal nature of the settlements drawn up between both parties to convince foreign audiences of their cause. Extraordinary ambassador Samuel Morland—whom we met in Chapter 1—and Léger tellingly referred to the Peace of Cavour as an ‘edict’ in their histories of the massacre. It is likely that they likened it to the 1598 Edict of Nantes, which provided a sound basis for Reformed minority rights in France by having been declared ‘perpetual and irrevocable’ by Henry IV.³⁰⁵ The *Relation véritable*, one of the two main pamphlets published by the Waldensians, devoted some seven of its twenty-five pages to the details of the settlements and decrees issued between 1561 and 1653 to convince its foreign audiences that the 1655 crackdown had been a breach of contract.³⁰⁶ In other words, great attention is paid to the normative principle of rule of law.

When the court of Savoy finally engaged with international public polemic in July 1655, as discussed in Chapter 1, they put even more emphasis on the conflict as a legal issue. One of the two court-issued pamphlets, the *Somma delle ragioni & fondamenti con quali S.A.R. s’è mossa a*

³⁰⁴ For an overview of the different concessions issued between 1561 and 1655 see A. Blair, *History of the Waldenses; with and introductory sketch of the history of the Christian churches in the south of France and north of Italy, till these churches submitted to the pope, when the Waldenses continued as formerly independent of the Papal See*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh and London, 1833), p. 620.

³⁰⁵ The different terms used for the Peace of Cavour throughout history are discussed in T. Pons, ‘Sulla Pace di Cavour del 1561 e suoi storici’, *Bollettino della Società di studi Valdesi* 110 (1961), 127–148; D. Margolf, *Religion and royal justice in early modern France. The Paris Chambre de l’Edit, 1598–1665* (Kirksville, MO, 2003), p. 4.

³⁰⁶ Anonymous, *Waerachtich verbael van ‘t gene eenigen tijdt herwaerts inde Valeyen van Piemont is voor-gevallien*.

prohibire alli heretici della Valle di Luserna l'habitatione fuori de limiti tolerate (*Sum of the reasons & foundations which has moved his most serene highness to prohibit the heretics of the valley of Lucern to live beyond the tolerated limits*) exclusively presents a positive legal history of the toleration of the Waldensians, on the basis of which the Order of Gastaldo is justified.³⁰⁷ The pamphlet emphasizes, among other issues, that the Peace of Cavour had never been ratified by Duke Emmanuel Philibert.³⁰⁸ It further argues that later edicts promulgated by the dukes of Savoy confirmed that ‘no privilege, grace, or toleration [was] granted to the inhabitants’ apart from those that had been ratified, and that the last edict of 1653 had in fact been formally accepted by the Waldensians.³⁰⁹ Moreover, the Order of Gastaldo did nothing more than force those who broke contract to move and comply again.³¹⁰ Disobeying the order was therefore a move ‘full of injustice and rebellion’:³¹¹

After all this, how can anyone question or doubt, but that their chastisement was most just, and that simply to transport themselves out of one place into another, between which there is so exceeding little distance, was the mildest punishment that could be inflicted upon them for so great a stubbornness?³¹²

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to argue which of the two warring parties provided a more truthful or coherent legal case. The point to stress here is that such legal details were considered important. Modern Western readers are likely to judge that the positive legal position of a discriminated minority—the domestic rule of law—becomes fully irrelevant in the face of mass murder.³¹³ As we have seen in Chapter 1, however, both the court of Savoy

³⁰⁷ Anonymous, *Somma delle ragioni & fondamenti con quali S.A.R. s'è mossa a prohibire alli heretici della Valle di Luserna l'habitatione fuori de limiti tolerate*, transcription in Morland, *History of the Evangelical churches*, pp. 405–422.

³⁰⁸ Anonymous, *Somma delle ragioni*, p. 406.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 421.

³¹² Translation by Morland; *ibid.*, p. 420.

³¹³ This is not to say that positive legal argumentation no longer plays a significant role in public debate on persecution. In 2016 the Myanmar government partly justified its persecution of the Rohingya by arguing that they are not Burmese citizens and have immigrated illegally into the Rakhine state; A.H. Milton, M. Rahman, S. Hussain, et al., ‘Trapped in statelessness. Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh’, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 14–8 (2017), p. 2; many Western observers counter this positive legal justification by pointing to human rights. The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), for one, judged that ‘Myanmar’s security forces [...] have a duty to respect and to protect the human rights of all persons in northern Rakhine State [...], regardless of their official citizenship or residency status, without any form of discrimination’; ICJ Global Redress and Accountability Initiative, ‘Myanmar. Questions and answers on human rights law in Rakhine

and the Waldensians were greatly concerned with the question of whether the latter had ‘rebelled’ and so deserved some kind of punishment. To some extent this question was bound to remain unresolved. Whether treaties made by sovereign predecessors did or did not have to be ratified by current ones, whether fees were paid as punishments or as guarantees, or whether and how concessions—which were always issued as a merciful gesture—could be revoked, were questions about which there was no clear-cut consensus or an authoritative and detailed European tradition.³¹⁴ As Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger notes, early modern Europe had no equivalent of the ‘self-evident cosmos of formally established written legal norms through which we continuously move in the modern world’.³¹⁵ Despite efforts to legally define the boundaries of religious coexistence, toleration remained dependent on a benevolent interpretation of a sometimes inconsistent system of laws.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the parties involved—the persecuted Waldensians and the persecuting court of Savoy—based their arguments to a large extent on the normative principle of rule of law, fighting over the niceties of positive laws in the form of historical contracts. Both parties, however, also tried to transcend this framework, albeit in different ways. The court of Savoy argued that the ruler’s power went beyond maintaining existing positive laws; the *Somma delle ragioni* argues that historical contracts are only of consequence if they have been ratified by the current ruler. This argument fits within a tradition of absolutist thought in which toleration is dependent on the sovereign’s will—which we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 4. However, the court did not go as far as to completely settle the question by arguing that the sovereign’s will is law—the Roman legal principle that *rex est lex loquens*.³¹⁶ Responding *in extenso* to the Waldensians’ legal reflections, Savoyard apologists did not completely subordinate the normative principle of rule of law to the normative principle of (the ruler’s undivided) sovereignty. Considering their intended readership, this was probably

state briefing note, November 2017’ (Geneva, 2017), <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/ICJ-2017-11-Rakhine-Advocacy-Briefing-Paper-2017-en-.pdf>.

³¹⁴ H. Mohnhaupt, ‘Privileg, Gesetz, Vertrag, Konzession. Subjektives Recht und Formen der Rechtserteilung zwischen Gnade und Anspruch’, in T. Chiusi, T. Gergen, and H. Jung (eds.), *Das Recht und seine historischen Grundlagen. Festschrift für Elmar Wadler zum 70. Geburtstag* (Berlin, 2008), pp. 635–638.

³¹⁵ B. Stollberg-Rilinger, *The emperor’s old clothes. Constitutional history and the symbolic language of the Holy Roman Empire* (New York, 2015), p. 6.

³¹⁶ V. Kahn, *Wayward contracts. The crisis of political obligation in England, 1640–1674* (Princeton, NJ, 2004), p. 42.

a sensible move;³¹⁷ it is unlikely that audiences in the Dutch Republic and England, countries with strong contract-oriented political traditions, would have found such reasoning very convincing.

Necessity

By providing an almost exclusively positivist legal response to the Waldensian pamphlets, the duke's apologists provided their readers with a rather particular sense of the justness of the situation. Justice was weighed almost entirely on the basis of whether positive laws had been adhered to or broken. To a lesser extent, as we have seen, it was also conflated with the duke's sovereign will. However, why these laws were just was not an object of discussion in the Savoyard pamphlets. The duke's right was legitimized through the normative principle of rule of law, not through political prudence or reason of state—the normative principle of reason. And although they had initially provided a religious account of events for a domestic public, they did not fall back on the normative principle of religion to justify their actions abroad either. In other words, the court did not aim to publicly justify its policy of territorially bounded toleration. Although the court's pamphlets meticulously pointed out why the duke had the right to force the Waldensians back into the three valleys, they did not explain his motivation for doing so with rigor.

The Waldensian pamphlets, by contrast, went beyond rule of law argumentation by elaborating on the facts on the ground. The *Relation véritable* argues that those who lived within the tolerated valleys—and were therefore innocent—almost succumbed under the population pressure of those who were forced to return.³¹⁸ The Order of Gastaldo was thus delegitimized because it forced the Waldensians into unlivable circumstances. The *Suite de la relation véritable*—which was issued several months later—also argues that the sudden obligation to abandon the settlements and return to the tolerated valleys, which could not support so many people,

³¹⁷ In Chapter 1 we have seen that the Savoyard court issued their account of events after having been warned about a Dutch publication. Moreover, the Savoyard ambassador to Paris ensured he presented a copy of the first apology to his Dutch counterpart. This indicates that the Savoyards had devised the pamphlets with, among others, a Dutch readership in mind.

³¹⁸ Anonymous, *Relation véritable*, p. 21.

effectively amounted to a death sentence.³¹⁹ In other words, above the positive laws, the Waldensians adopted, without conceptualizing it, a Tacitan notion of necessity and the right to self-preservation.³²⁰ Savoyard apologists did not directly engage with the problem of overpopulation as a pragmatic argument against the living restrictions. On the contrary, they stated that the fact that the Waldensians resorted to reasons of ‘remote distance, incommmodity, and barrenness’ to dissuade the duke from enforcing the Order of Gastaldo, only proved that they lacked a legal foothold.³²¹ In short, whereas the Waldensians rhetorically distinguished between legal right and human necessity, the Savoyard apologists refused to recognize the latter as a proper justification, at least not as this applied to the Waldensians.

So far, we have seen how both parties tried to convince an international audience of what they saw as the true causes of the conflict, whether the Waldensians had rebelled and, consequently, whether the duke had had the right to punish his subjects for *lèse-majesté*. Pamphleteers also went to great lengths to describe the nature of the violence itself. Savoyard apologists argued that the punishment, the quartering of soldiers, had been non-violent. According to the author of the *Somma de' successi* the soldiers behaved like ‘an army of friends are wont to do, when they come in a great body into a village forsaken by the inhabitants, which was, to make use of what they there found’, but refrained from harming people.³²² Indeed, Pianezza argued that he had let villagers ‘see [rather than] [...] feel their deserved punishment’.³²³ When the army met armed resistance, however, things inevitably turned violent, yet the commander insisted that only those who had taken up arms had been killed.³²⁴ However, this argument sat uncomfortably with the territorial nature of the settlement between the duke and his Reformed subjects. The *Somma delle ragioni* recounts how most illegal settlers,

³¹⁹ Anonymous, *Suite de la relation veritable contenant une briefve refutation de l'invective du Marquis de Pianesse contre les Reformés des vallées de Piemont*, incorporated in Anonymous, *Relation veritable de ce qui s'est passé dans les persecutions & massacres faits cette année, aux Eglises Reformées de Piemont, avec la refutation des calomnies dont les adversaires de la verité taschent de les noircir* (s.l. 1655), pp. 60–61. The *Suite de la relation veritable* was also published in Dutch in The Hague; Anonymous, *Vervolch van het waerachtich verhael, inhoudende een pertinente wederleggingh, vande lasteringen van der marquis van Pianesse, tegens de gereformeerde vande valeyen van Piemont* (The Hague, 1655), pfl 7632.

³²⁰ L. Ashworth, *A history of international thought. From the origins of the modern state to academic international relations* (London and New York, 2014), pp. 32–33.

³²¹ Anonymous, *Somma delle ragioni*, p. 409.

³²² *Ibid.*, p. 393.

³²³ ‘[...] più tosto per fargli veder, che provar il meritato castigo’; *ibid.*, p. 401.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 402.

in an unfounded fear of quartering, fled into the three tolerated valleys with all their belongings. The Savoyard army was therefore forced to follow and occupy villages within the tolerated valleys, lest they themselves starve.³²⁵ Here, the court's apologists did acknowledge that necessity trumped positive law.

In short, the Savoyard apologies made a clear distinction between punishment and violence. The latter was only resorted to out of necessity and was not part of the punishment. Accordingly, the pamphlet argues that most casualties had resulted from an unnecessary and dangerous flight into the mountains, where the Waldensians were overtaken by the harsh weather. Pianezza insists that the children found alive were taken care of, and that the women were protected from the soldiers, who were given a monetary reward instead. All in all, the commander claims in his apology, not more than two hundred perished 'taking together those frozen to death in the snow and those killed by iron'.³²⁶

Communicating Cruelty

Of course, the Waldensians had communicated a very different perspective on events to their audiences across the Alps, namely that a 'massacre' had taken place. The actual accounts of violence had a relatively modest place in the Waldensian pamphlets. The *Relation véritable*, for instance, devotes only ten of its 83 pages to recounting the atrocities themselves.³²⁷ Of course, the number of pages devoted to a subject does not always correspond with its relative importance. It reveals little about the desired or actual impact on the reader. Yet the relative brevity of the description of violence tells us that what made a massacre a massacre depended to some extent on the legal details of the conflict and not just on the violence itself. The author

³²⁵ Ibid., pp. 393–398.

³²⁶ '[...] se mettiamo insieme i morti nella neve dal freddo con li uccisi dal ferro'; Ibid., p. 398.

³²⁷ Anonymous, *Relation véritable*, pp. 26–35; four out of twenty–five in Anonymous, *Waerachtich verhael van 't gene gepasseert is*; five of forty–eight in Anonymous, *Waerachtich verhael, van 't gene eenigen tijdt herwaerts*, pfl 7631; three out of eighteen in Anonymous, *Wreede vervolginge en schrickelijcke moordt aende Vaudoisien in Piedmont geschiet in 't Jaer 1655* (1655), pfl 7622.

of the *Relation veritable* accordingly argues that ‘to see with more certainty whether it was with reason that they came to such rigor [...] depends on knowledge of the law’.³²⁸

Whether an act of violence was legitimate did not, however, depend only on whether those who suffered it were guilty. Some acts of violence were illegitimate in and of themselves and could, as such, suggest the innocence of those who suffered it. In recent years, historians have greatly enhanced our understanding of how early modern individuals and communities remembered and communicated the violence they suffered. Judith Pollmann and others have shown that memories of violence were often structured within a Christian framework of redemption. Prevalent narratives of religious suffering allowed some early modern people to reframe their experiences of extreme violence as having a spiritual purpose.³²⁹ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anabaptists all canonized stories about the violent deaths of their respective martyrs.³³⁰ Such stories provided proof for the righteousness of one’s beliefs. After all, Christ himself had said that the true Church was a persecuted church. Moreover, the faithfulness of those who were willing to suffer a violent death for their beliefs made them worthy, if not of emulation, at least of admiration. It is important to note, however, that religious communities did not recognize each other’s martyrs. Dying for one’s faith was not enough; to become martyr, one had to die for the true faith. They followed Augustine’s adagium: ‘Not the punishment but the cause makes a martyr’.³³¹

Early modern Europeans did not only communicate their experiences with violence in order to confirm the purity of their religious beliefs. The fact that one had suffered atrocities could also be used as a political tool to denounce the perpetrator in a way that transcended the confessional divide. As Ramon Voges has recently argued, representations of massacres were not neutral or innocent.³³² Research suggests that if there was no political capital to be gained

³²⁸ ‘[...] pour voir plus assurément si c’est avec raison qu’on est venu à telle rigueur [...] dépend de la connoissance de du droit’; Anonymous, *Relation veritable*, p. 41.

³²⁹ Pollmann, *Memory in early modern Europe*, p. 166; E. Kuijpers, ‘Fear, indignation, grief and relief. Emotional narratives in war chronicles from the Netherlands (1568–1648)’, in J. Spinks and C. Zika (eds.), *Disaster, death and the emotions in the shadow of the apocalypse, 1400–1700* (London, 2016), p. 95.

³³⁰ Gregory, *Salvation at stake*.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 330; Pierre Jurieu—who we will discuss in more detail in Chapters 3, 4, and 5—would repeat this argument in the face of the Huguenot persecutions; Van der Linden, *Experiencing exile*, p. 163.

³³² R. Voges, ‘Macht, Massaker und Repräsentationen. Darstellungen asymmetrischer Gewalt in der Bildpublizistik Franz Hogenbergs’, in J. Baberowski and G. Metzler (eds.), *Gewalträume. Soziale Ordnungen im Ausnahmezustand* (Frankfurt and New York, 2012), p. 39.

from communicating the memory of atrocity, communities' initial response was often to remain silent about the violence they had experienced, or at least not discuss it outside the private domain.³³³ If they publicized their fate, they did so as a political counterattack to the military force they had experienced.³³⁴

I want to argue that even—or especially if—the perpetrator belonged to a different religion, such counterattacks in the form of pamphlets describing an atrocity depended on a shared notion of what constituted unacceptable violence. On no side of the confessional divide in early modern Europe would one find authoritative political thinkers or theologians who argued that cannibalism, infanticide, or rape were legitimate acts of violence or legal punishment.³³⁵ As such, having suffered such acts of violence provided a secular argument against the adversary who had purportedly indulged in it. Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) illustrates this dynamic in a reflection on his experiences during the French wars of religion; in his essay *Of cruelty* he chooses to desist from pointing to a specific confession in his denouncement of the extreme violence he witnessed:

I live in a time wherein we abound in incredible examples of this vice, through the license of our civil wars: and we see nothing in ancient histories more extreme than what we have proof of every day, but I cannot, any the more, get used to it. I could hardly persuade myself, before I saw it with my eyes, that there could be found souls so cruel and fell, who, for the sole pleasure of murder, would commit it; would hack and lop off the limbs of others; sharpen their wits to invent unusual torments and new kinds of death, without hatred, without profit, and for no other end but only to enjoy the pleasant spectacle of the gestures and motions, the lamentable groans and cries of a man dying in anguish.³³⁶

This non-religious approach to excessive violence could nevertheless be used as a polemical tool in the Reformation. Protestants often blamed Catholics not only for being theologically errant, but also for being cruel. As an essentially secular argument, such narratives proved

³³³ E. Kuijpers and J. Pollmann, 'Why remember terror? Memories of violence in the Dutch Revolt', in Ó Siochrú and Ohlmeyer (eds.), *Ireland 1641*, pp. 177–178.

³³⁴ Voges, 'Macht, Massaker', p. 40.

³³⁵ A. Coudert, 'The ultimate crime. Cannibalism in early modern minds and imaginations', in A. Classen and C. Scarborough (eds.), *Crime and punishment in the middle ages and the early modern age. Mental–historical investigations of basic human problems and social responses* (Berlin and Boston, MA, 2012), pp. 521–522.

³³⁶ M. de Montaigne, 'Of cruelty', in W. Hazlitt (ed.), *Michel de Montaigne. Selected essays* (Mineola, NY, 2011), p. 89.

resistant to the eventual mellowing of Europe's religious divide; secular Enlightenment thinkers happily denounced the Inquisition as the paragon of religious fanaticism, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.³³⁷ Indeed, to this day references to, for instance, the Inquisition remain an integral part of anti-religious discourse by atheist activists such as Richard Dawkins.³³⁸ The other side of the coin was that references to cruelty and excessive violence could potentially convince people to dissociate themselves from coreligionist perpetrators. As Koenraad Swart and Judith Pollmann have argued, Dutch insurgents rallied both Catholics and Protestants to their cause by pointing to Spanish cruelty, and even legitimized their declaration of independence in 1581 by pointing to the excessive violence they continued to suffer.³³⁹

In short, we can crudely distinguish between two early modern approaches to cruelty. One offers a meaningful redemptive framework, which sees the victim as finding religious fulfillment. Martyrologist Jean Crespin would describe a martyr's painful death as a 'happy ending' and gladly quoted Tertullian's motto that 'the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church'.³⁴⁰ To be sure, Crespin also characterized the violence committed against martyrs as 'barbarous and inhumane'. But the condemnation of violence as being inhumane was not always explicitly tied to claims to confessional superiority. The second approach is more secular and focuses on the senselessness of unnecessary and pleasure-oriented violence against people, and it is approached inclusively, using the argument that everyone is a human being. As such, references to cruelty refer to a normative principle of humanity.

³³⁷ J. Domínguez, 'A state within a state. The Inquisition in Enlightenment thought', *History of European Ideas* 43–4 (2016), pp. 376–388.

³³⁸ See, for instance, J. Coyne, 'If ISIS is not Islamic, then the Inquisition was not Catholic', *Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason & Science* (2014), <https://www.richarddawkins.net/2014/09/if-isis-is-not-islamic-then-the-inquisition-was-not-catholic/>; S. Kruszynska, 'Écrasez l'infâme. Voltaire's philosophy of religion', *Miscellanea anthropologica et sociologica* 16–1 (2015), pp. 125–137.

³³⁹ K. Swart, 'The black legend during the Eighty Years War', in J. Bromley and E. Kossmann (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands V. Some political mythologies. Papers delivered to the fifth Anglo-Dutch historical conference* (The Hague, 1975), pp. 36–57; J. Pollmann, 'Eine natürliche Feindschaft. Ursprung und Funktion der schwarzen Legende über Spanien in den Niederlanden, 1560–1581', in F. Bosbach (ed.), *Feindbilder. Die Darstellung des Gegners in der politischen Publizistik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit* (Cologne, 1992), pp. 73–94.

³⁴⁰ D. Kelley, 'Martyrs, myths, and the massacre. The background of St. Bartholomew', *American Historical Review* 77–5 (1972), p. 1327.

Religious Persecution

The Waldensian pamphlets carry elements of both these discursive traditions of cruelty, one religious, the other secular. Religious language played a crucial role on different argumentative levels. First, at the beginning the *Relation véritable* confidently states that there are few churches that have ‘experienced the wonders of God’s grace in the conversation of His believers and where the devil has deployed his malice with all his furious force for their dissipation’ more than that of the Waldensians.³⁴¹ Indeed, the author makes an explicit truth claim at the expense of Catholicism by arguing that the Lord has ‘maintained this smoking candle amidst the darkness of error and superstition’.³⁴² Second, there are several reports in which the victims are portrayed in a martyr-like fashion, remaining steadfast in their faith as they are tortured and murdered. One man who was bound to a tree, for instance, told his tormentor that he could tie his body as tightly as he could but that it would not keep his spirit from going to paradise.³⁴³

A third, closely related argument offers a religious account of events of a different kind. The Waldensian pamphlets tried to convince the reader that, since they lacked a proper legal basis, the Savoyards persecuted the Reformed for their religion. This was further supported by the fact that a commission for the extirpation of heresy had recently been founded in Turin and, most importantly, that a conversion to Catholicism would guarantee amnesty for the persecuted.³⁴⁴ The Waldensian *Suite de la relation véritable*, which was published in response to Pianezza’s apologies, summarizes this last point:

None of those who remained firm in the profession of their religion received mercy [...]. This proof is not countered with the subterfuge and evasion which the Marquis [of Pianezza] found, saying that it is a clemency, which the Prince [of Savoy] could give to those who abjured the Reformed religion and that through this abjuration the alleged rebellion of living outside the limits ceased [...]. If these cavils took place, it would not be possible to say that the pagan emperors ever persecuted or killed anyone for reasons of religion, nor that there was ever any confessor or martyr who had suffered to

³⁴¹ ‘[...] qui ait esprouvé la merveille de la grace de Dieu dans la conservation de ses fideles, & ou le DIable ait desployé sa malice avec toute sorte de fureur pour leur dissipation’; Anonymous, *Relation véritable*, p. 2.

³⁴² ‘[...] maintenu ce lumignon fumant parmi les tenebres de l’erreur & de la persecution’; *ibid.*

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁴⁴ Anonymous, *Recit véritable*, p. 4.

maintain the Christian faith, as one could always have said that it was because they lived in the Empire, against the orders of the Emperor.³⁴⁵

This argument was supported by the observation that clergy had been directly responsible for some of the violence; the *Relation véritable* describes how a Franciscan monk and a priest had been among the main culprits and had set a church on fire.³⁴⁶ At first glance, accusations of religious persecution appears to fall within the same normative principle as the first two religious arguments. After all, religious difference is identified as the main cause behind the violence, which is enacted by an intolerant perpetrator. However, the latter argument follows a different logic, one that is not necessarily based on confessional truth. In principle, it is possible to accuse a party of indulging in religious persecution without making a value judgment regarding the confession of either the persecuting or persecuted parties. Of course, as we have seen above, certain confessions could be (and were) accused of being particularly prone to religious persecution. But the power of the argument lies precisely in the fact that it transcends the trenches of theological truth claims. This explains why the court of Savoy claimed that the punishment of the Waldensians had not been about religion but about rebellion.

What then constitutes religious persecution? This question was hotly contested by contemporaries, but most observers approached it in reference to the law, which always discriminated between different groups of subjects. As Benjamin Kaplan observes, early modern societies knew no equality before the law, as it always prescribed different privileges to different corporate bodies. Differentiating between confessional groups thus followed a rationale which structured all layers of society. This meant that some princes went as far as to

³⁴⁵ '[...] on n'a reçu à grace aucun de ceux qui sont demeurés fermes en la profession de la religion [...]. Cette preuve n'est point invalidée par le subterfuge & l'eschappatoire que le Marquis à trouvé, disant que c'est une grace que le Prince a pu faire à ceux qui abjuroyent la Religion Reformee, & que par cette abjuration la rebellion pretendue d'habiter hors des limites cessoit [...]. Si cette cauillation avoit lieu, on ne pourroit point dire que les Empereurs Payens eussent jamais persecuté out fait mourir aucun pour cause de religion, ni que jamais il y ait eu ni confesseur ni martyr qui ait souffert pour maintenir la foy Chrestienne, veu que l'on eust pu tousiours dire que c'estoit parce qu'ils habitoyent en l'Empire contre les ordres de l'Empereur'; Anonymous, *Suite de la relation véritable contenant une briefve refutation de l'invective du Marquis de Pianesse contre les Reformés des vallées de Piemont*, incorporated in Anonymous, *Relation véritable de ce qui s'est passé dans les persecutions & massacres faits cette année, aux Eglises Reformées de Piemont, avec la refutation des calomnies dont les adversaires de la verité taschent de les noircir* (s.l. 1655), p. 63.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

conflate religious dissent with treason and thus persecuted dissenters without regarding this as a confessionally intolerant policy.³⁴⁷ The Catholic cardinal William Allan (1532–1594), to take a telling example, had argued that Mary I’s persecutions of Protestants had been just, because they conformed to the existing laws against heresy in sixteenth-century England. The Protestant condemnation of Catholics for heresy, on the other hand, was cruel and unjust because they had themselves abolished the laws for heresy, meaning that they persecuted Catholics for their faith.³⁴⁸

For the court of Savoy, a corporate body with limited privileges had gone beyond its bounds and had been punished for rebelling, and had thus not suffered religious persecution; the court internationally justified its actions as a question, first, of rule of law, and second, of domestic sovereignty, not of religion. The Waldensians, in turn, countered this by pointing to the fact that the duke pardoned all those who became Catholics, conveying the limits of the court’s rule of a law argumentation. Then as now, there was a perceived tension between the princely (or presidential) right of pardoning and the rule of law. Natalie Zemon Davis has observed that even in the sixteenth century narratives identified pardoning as strengthening the prince’s sovereignty as he pushed his power ‘beyond the law’.³⁴⁹ During the wars of religion, Protestants had begun to question the legitimacy of royal pardons on the basis of divine law rather than rule of law, arguing that they constituted a confusion between divine forgiveness and royal grace.³⁵⁰ This line of reasoning did not remain exclusively Protestant. In the seventeenth century, critics found an unlikely ally in Jean Bodin, who argued that while granting pardons was a ‘mark of sovereignty’ it should not be applied to those who had broken divine law.³⁵¹ The Waldensians, however, criticized the duke’s pardoning as pushing beyond ‘rule of law’ rather than ‘divine law’, which fitted their strategy of staying away from theological discussion.

³⁴⁷ Kaplan, *Divided by faith*, p. 123.

³⁴⁸ D. Baraz, *Medieval cruelty. Changing perceptions, late antiquity to the early modern period* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 2003), p. 155.

³⁴⁹ N. Davis, *Fiction in the archives. Pardon tales and their tellers in sixteenth-century France* (Palo Alto, CA, 1987), p. 58.

³⁵⁰ A. Frisch, *Forgetting differences. Tragedy, historiography, and the French wars of religion* (Edinburgh, 2015), p. 34.

³⁵¹ Bodin argues that ‘the sovereign prince cannot extend grace in the case of a penalty established by the law of God’. Citation from Frisch, *Forgetting differences*, p. 34.

The Waldensian approach to what constitutes religious persecution found an interesting opponent in the Dutch ambassador and contemporary historian Lieuwe van Aitzema. Judging from a considerable number of handwritten copies of political correspondence about the Piedmont Easter in Aitzema's archive, the diplomat-historian had closely followed events as they unfolded, but came to a provocative conclusion.³⁵² In his magnum opus *Saken van staet en oorlogh* (*Matters of state and war*), Aitzema compares the situation of the Waldensians with the persecution of the Anabaptists in the Swiss Evangelical cantons some years before:

Those in Bern chased away all Anabaptists, not because of religion, so they said, but because they did not want to accept the legitimate government. Surely, it was because they did not want to follow the religion that was dominant in Bern [...]. The Duke of Savoy could have said something similar: I follow the Roman Religion: I cannot and do not want to allow another [religion] and I desire that all the Waldensians leave or accept my religion.³⁵³

Aitzema argues that similar laws in the English Commonwealth prohibited the entry of the Jesuits. When they come anyway and are punished for it, the diplomat argues, one cannot speak of religious violence:³⁵⁴

Does not every sovereign make laws in his country? The heathen, Turkish, Tartar, Muscovite and all [other] potentates make laws for the maintaining of their religion.³⁵⁵

The ambassador writes that the same would happen to Catholics in the United Provinces if they were to start taking over churches and town halls, without anyone suggesting that they were persecuted for religious reasons.³⁵⁶ In short, Aitzema takes a firm 'rule of law' position;

³⁵² 'Stukken betreffende de Waldenzen in Piedmont', Archief van Leo van Aitzema 1.10.02, inv. nr. 93, Nationaal Archief, The Hague.

³⁵³ '[...] die van Bern verjagende alle doopsgesinde; niet om de religie / sooze seyden / maer om datze de wettelijke overigheydt niet wilden kennen [...]. Den hertog van Savoyen hadde konnen desgelijcx zeggen. Ick volgh de Roomsche gods-dienst. Ick kan noch wil geen ander toelaten. ende begeer dat de Vaudoisen of vertrecken of mijn religie aen nemen'; L. van Aitzema, *Saken van staet en oorlogh in ende omtrent de Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. 3 (The Hague, 1669), p. 1230.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 1240.

³⁵⁵ 'Maect niet een yder souverain wetten in sijn landt? De heydensche / Turksche / Tartarische / Moscovijtsche ende alle potentanten / maecken wetten tot behoudenis van haer religien'; ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

the enforcement of laws which keep religious minorities in check do not constitute religious persecution.

Aitzema's rather radical position derives from his advocacy for a state church. The ambassador believed that for a polity to be stable it needed an inclusive and dogmatically lenient state church to which all subjects were obliged to conform.³⁵⁷ In doing so, he followed Hugo Grotius' philosophy that the civil sovereign should hold supreme authority over the Church, which teaches only the fundamentals of Christian belief and leaves 'indifferent matters' to individual judgment.³⁵⁸

In short, we can argue that the Waldensians and Aitzema had a diametrically opposed conception of the relation between the rule of law and religious difference. Whereas the first invoked the rule of law as a secular tool which regulates (the limits of) religious toleration, the latter invokes it as a secularized tool which allows rulers to enforce religious conformity. The difference lies in the fact that Aitzema approaches the ruler not only as a 'law keeper', but also as a 'law giver', or, in the words of Kinch Hoekstra, the 'single unlimited source of legal and political authority'.³⁵⁹ In other words, we can argue that the diplomat-historian conflates the normative principles of rule of law and sovereignty.

Hence, the public discussion about what constitutes religious persecution sheds new light on Daniel Nexon's observation that the reification of sovereignty 'did not amount to a secularization of politics, but to a domestication of religious conflict'.³⁶⁰ First, it shows that the process of juridification could have a similar dynamic; the legal ordering of religious difference in Europe may have decreased the occurrence of religious violence. But it also allowed governments to oppress confessional dissidents in reference to secular law and deny that they engaged in religious persecution. Second, it shows that opinion makers were aware of the paradox of sovereignty and rule of law as secular normative principles, and actively debated it during concrete political crises. Third, the fact that such questions were publicly discussed to

³⁵⁷ G. van der Plaats, *Eendracht als opdracht. Lieve van Aitzema's bijdrage aan het publieke debat* (Hilversum, 2003), pp. 197–231.

³⁵⁸ A. Weststeijn, *Commercial republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age. The political thought of Pieter and Johan de la Court* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2012), pp. 300–302.

³⁵⁹ K. Hoekstra, 'Early modern absolutism and constitutionalism', *Cardozo Law Review* 34–3 (2013), p. 1080.

³⁶⁰ See the Introduction.

influence political behavior across borders calls for a critical reassessment of whether religious conflict was truly ‘domesticated’, as has been discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

A Matter of Humanity

As has been briefly discussed, the stories of atrocity certainly tapped from a tradition of martyrdom, but cannot be reduced to it. The accounts offer little room for redemption and happy endings in the spirit of Crespin. Indeed, one reference to the victims as martyrs is immediately followed by a statement about witnesses crying for vengeance.³⁶¹ The fates of most victims are not described with recourse to religious qualities; they are above all approached as suffering humans rather than as Protestants and their fates are presented as stupefying more than edifying. The Waldensian pamphlets emphasize that the army indiscriminately killed ‘the young and the old, the great and the small, the men and the women, the fathers and the children’, causing a complete disruption of social order.³⁶² They recount how with ‘barbaric cruelty’ the soldiers raped more than 150 women, literally tore apart children, cut open people and rubbed salt and gunpowder in their wounds, genitally mutilated people of both sexes, and impaled them, while other soldiers indulged in cannibalism and tried to eat the brains of their victims. Readers got the impression that the soldiers made a game out of their killing, tying people up and rolling them from hills, beating each other with severed body parts, and playing ball games with severed heads. The aftermath of the massacre is described as something that resembles the mess after a feast:

You would find the head of a child here, the genitals of a man [there], and the pieces of flesh of many, which the beasts had not yet managed to eat.³⁶³

Outrageous games with body parts, cannibalism, and rape constituted forms of violence from which the perpetrator appeared to derive satisfaction. The pamphlets told their readers that

³⁶¹ Anonymous, *Relation véritable*, p. 23.

³⁶² ‘[...] les jeunes & le vieux, les grands & le petits, les hommes & les femmes, les peres & les enfans’; *ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁶³ ‘Vous trouviez ici la teste d’un enfant, les parties honteuses d’un homme, & les lambeaus de plusieurs que les bestes n’avoient pas encore achevé de manger’; Anonymous, *Recit véritable*, pp. 34–35.

the violence had not been orderly and controlled in the name of the law but random and pleasure-oriented. In short, one could judge solely from the violence itself that it had not been a legitimate punishment because: (1) it was also enacted against people who cannot have been presumed guilty; (2) it included outrageous forms of violence which in no circumstances can constitute a legitimate form of punishment; (3) those who enacted it derived pleasure from it, or even carried it out solely for the sake of pleasure—making it cruel in a Montaignian sense. The author accordingly uses an inclusive language of identification:

There is no one, who has not discarded all sentiments of humanity, who can bear to hear this without trembling and who is not curious to know the reasons and motives that might have led to actions so barbarous and unheard-of.³⁶⁴

In an appeal to the provinces to raise funds, the States General similarly argued that the Waldensians had been treated with ‘gruesome, inhumane, and more than barbaric cruelty’.³⁶⁵ Pity, conversely, is identified as an innate human property. Several pamphlets emphasize this with hyperbolic statements about how even barbaric people, such as cannibals—those on the margins of humanity—would protest against such cruelty. The Dutch pamphlet *Ephraim met Juda, dat is Engellant met Hollant, toonende dat de vereeniging van alle evangelische, protesterende, gereformeerde vorsten, staten, en kercken, een genoechsaeem middel is, om tot niet te maecken het moort-verbont der papisten, 't welck sy, tot uytroyinge der gereformeerden, van outs, en nu weeder teegen de Waldensen hebben in het werck gestelt* (*Ephraim with Juda, which is England with Holland, showing that the unification of all Evangelical, Protesting, Reformed princes, states, and churches is a secure means of destroying the murderous covenant of the Papists, which they, to extirpate the Reformed, have endeavored as of old and now again against the Waldensians*), which will be examined in more detail below, for instance, argues that the event would be rejected by ‘men, Christians, Turks, and Barbarians, even by the men-eating

³⁶⁴ ‘[...] il n’y a personne, s’il n’a despoillé tout sentiment d’humanité, qui puisse les ouït raconteur sans tremir, & qui ne soit curieux de sçavoir les raisons & les motifs qui ont peu donner lieu à un traitement si inouï, & si barbare’; Anonymous, *Relation véritable*, p. 1; the term ‘sentiment d’humanité’ is ambiguous and could refer to human sentiment, sentiment for humanity, or humanity. The Dutch translation of the pamphlet, for instance, translates it as ‘menschelijckheyt’ (humanity); Anonymous, *Waerachtich verbael, van 't gene gepasseert is*.

³⁶⁵ ‘[...] grouwelijcke, onmenschelicke ende meer als barbarische wreehteyt’; letter of the States General to the provinces, transcription in Rogge, ‘Vervolging der Waldenzen’, p. 169.

‘Tapuya’ [Fig. 4].³⁶⁶ By comparing the soldiers negatively to non-Christian peoples provided an argument that was both secular and religious. It presented the violence as outrageous by any human standard, degrading it to inhumane or beastly behavior. Since it was inhumane, it was all the more unchristian:

The pen falls from my hands describing these horrible things, from bringing back the thought alone, my body turns cold [...] one needs a diamond heart, a steel hand, & an iron feather to describe these tragic spectacles and the frightful prodigies of cruelty, unheard of in the most barbarous ancient times, let alone that they had ever been committed in Christendom.³⁶⁷

That the inhumanity of the event is distinguished from religious injustice becomes strikingly clear in the *Relation dernière*, which argues that both ‘common right and the laws of God [...] do not permit that the innocent are punished as the guilty’.³⁶⁸ In a Dutch version of the pamphlet ‘common right’ is translated as ‘human rights’ (‘menschelijcke rechten’).³⁶⁹

Since such stories appealed to a shared notion of what constitutes unacceptable violence, the Savoyard authorities were compelled to either deny them or refrain from discussing them. As we have seen, the *Somma delle ragioni* accordingly dealt almost exclusively with the legal aspects of the event while arguing that only people resisting had died by the hands of the duke’s army. The *Relatione de’ successi seguiti nella Valle di Luserna*, which Pianezza had written shortly before the ‘Patent of Grace’ ceased hostilities, adopted a different strategy by retaliating in kind.³⁷⁰ It recounts how the Waldensian insurgents under the command of Joshua Javanel indulged in all sorts of ‘extraordinary cruelties’, including iconoclasm, the

³⁶⁶ ‘Dit stuck sal vervloecht worden by menschen, christenen, by Turcken, by barbaren, jae by de menschen-etende Tapoyes’; J. Sceperus Amstel, *Ephraim met Juda. Opdraght aen alle evangelische, protesterende, gereformeerde vorsten, staten, en kercken, in Europa, voornamenlijck in het vry vereenigt Neederlandt ende in Engelandt* (Amsterdam, 1655), p. 60; the Dutch referred to non-Tupinamba Brazilian Indians as ‘Tapuya’, or ‘wild people’, who they believed to lack religion, cannibalize, and have no indigenous allies; see R. Parker Brienens, *Visions of savage paradise. Albert Eckhout, court painter in colonial Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam, 2006), p. 118.

³⁶⁷ ‘La plume me tombe des mains en la description de ces horribles choses, voire seulement à les ramener en la pensée, tout le corps fremit [...] il faugroi un coeur de diamant, une main d’acier, & une plume de fer pour descrire les tragiques spectacles, & les effroyables prodiges de cruauté qui se sont veus, inouïs dans l’antiquité la plus barbare; bien loin d’avoi iamais esté exercés dans la chretieneté; Anonymous, *Relation véritable*, pp. 21–22.

³⁶⁸ ‘[...] le droit commun & la loy de Dieu, [...] ne permer de punir l’innocent pour le coupable’; Anonymous, *Relation dernière*, p. 20.

³⁶⁹ ‘Menschelijcke rechten’; Anonymous, *Laetst oft nieuwst authentyke en seer waerachtigh verbael*, p. 23.

³⁷⁰ Laurenti, *Confini della comunità*, p. 189.

murder of numerous innocent Catholics ‘who had never even thought of troubling them’, and the mutilation of dead bodies.³⁷¹ The pamphlet concludes by arguing that every man should be able to see that the rebels had themselves ‘brought ruin over them’. This led them to publish strange reports

to excite compassion for their well-deserved chastisement and give a sinister impression of those who treated them justly and moderately, while they indulged in barbarous and inhumane behavior [...] against people over whom they had no authority, committing unheard of cruelties against the most innocent, their country- and kinsmen and those, who had had no knowledge at all, nor taken part in the troubles that had happened.³⁷²

Appropriating the Massacre

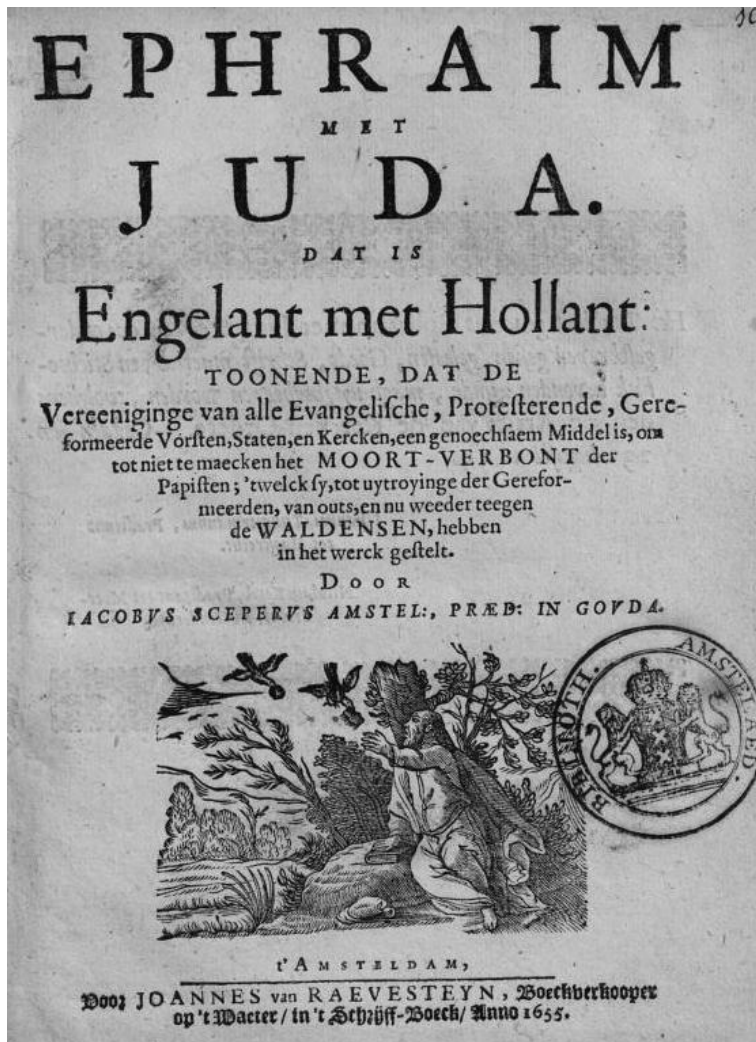
That stories of atrocity served a political strategy on both sides does not imply that they were works of fiction. It has, of course, long become impossible to verify these accounts, but it is perfectly possible that at least some of these acts of violence had indeed been committed by soldiers and insurgents. It is important to note, however, that references to the early Christians, Indian tribes, and Turks had been tropes in early modern atrocity media since at least the Reformation. Stories of unborn children cut from their mothers’ wombs in accounts of the Piedmont Easter can also be found in contemporary publications about, among others, the Conquest of the New World, the Sack of Rome, and the Dutch Revolt.³⁷³ Often, they harked back to biblical precedents. As such, the *Ephraim met Juda* calls the Savoyard army ‘spawn of

³⁷¹ Anonymous, *Relazione de’ successi seguiti nella valle di Luserna*, transcription in Morland, *History of the Evangelical Churches*, pp. 402–403.

³⁷² ‘[...] che vanno facendo per eccitar, non solo comiseratione del loro tanto meritato castigo, ma sinistro concetto contro chi l’hà loro giustamente e moderamente stabilito, mentre essi con tanto barbarie & inhumanità si sono portati’; Anonymous, *Relazione de’ successi*, p. 404.

³⁷³ J. Airey, *The politics of rape. Sexual atrocity, propaganda wars, and the Restoration stage* (Newark, DE, 2012), p. 74; K. Hirt, ‘Der Sacco di Roma 1527 in einer zeitgenössischen italienischen Versflugschrift. Das Massaker und die Einheit der Nation’, in C. Vogel (ed.), *Bilder des Schreckens. Die mediale Inszenierung von Massakern seit dem 16. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt and New York, 2006), pp. 46–47; W. Cilleßen, ‘Massaker in der niederländischen Erinnerungskultur. Die Bildwerdung der Schwarzen Legende’, in Vogel (ed.), *Bilder des Schreckens*, pp. 93–135; E. Kuijpers, ‘The creation and development of social memories of traumatic events. The Oudewater massacre of 1575’, in K. Rutkowski and M. Linden Hurting (eds.), *Memories and beneficial forgetting. Posttraumatic stress disorders, biographical developments, and social conflicts* (Amsterdam, 2013), pp. 194–196; F. Edelmayer, ‘The “Leyenda Negra” and the circulation of anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish prejudices’, *European History Online (EGO)* (2011), <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/edelmayerf-2010-en>.

Herod', referring to the Massacre of the Innocents.³⁷⁴ To a considerable extent, and perhaps unintentionally, the communication of the massacre was thus 'premediated' by stories about historical episodes of (interconfessional) violence to which the community had access. As Astrid Erll argues, 'existent media which circulate in a given society provide schemata for new experience and its representation'.³⁷⁵ Using 'existent patterns and paradigms [helped to] transform contingent events into meaningful images and narratives'.³⁷⁶



4. J. Sceperus, *Ephraim met Juda, dat is Engelant met Hollant* (Amsterdam, 1655). Resource: Special Collections, University of Amsterdam.

³⁷⁴ 'Herodes-gebroot'; Sceperus, *Ephraim met Juda*, p. 61.

³⁷⁵ A. Erll, 'Remembering across time, space, and culture. Premediation, remediation and the "Indian Mutiny"', in A. Erll and A. Nünning (eds.), *Media and cultural memory / Medien und kulturelle Erinnerung* (Berlin and New York, 2009), p. 111.

³⁷⁶ Erll, 'Remembering across time', p. 114.

At the same time, references omitted can be as insightful as the ones that were made. None of the Waldensian pamphlets refer to famous episodes of religious persecution in recent history, such as the 1641 Ulster massacres in Ireland, the persecutions in the Low Countries under the Duke of Alba, or the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Not all of these events were equally famous throughout Europe, but the 1572 slaughtering of Huguenots in France must have been well known among (educated) Waldensians, as was the history of the United Provinces. Only in their request to the States General from 27 July did the Waldensian Assembly allude to the Dutch Revolt, arguing that 'the misery, which you have suffered in different times assures us of your Christian compassion'.³⁷⁷

That such references were not used in pamphlets was probably a conscious strategy. We must bear in mind that many of the pamphlets produced by the Waldensians to appeal to a European public were set on disproving the accusation that they had rebelled against their sovereign. They therefore told a story of violence inflicted upon the harmless and left out the armed resistance that followed the Piedmont Easter. Making explicit comparisons with the Dutch Revolt—which ultimately led to the abjuration of a king—could harm this carefully constructed image of murdered innocence. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, in turn, remained a highly controversial issue that stood in an uneasy relationship with the confessionally neutralized memory of the wars of religion adopted by the French Crown to maintain peace within his kingdom.³⁷⁸ Evoking this event thus carried the risk of losing Louis XIV's goodwill.

But despite the Waldensians' reluctance to compare their current predicament with foreign religious conflicts, Dutchmen readily made associations with domestic politics. Unfortunately, there is only anecdotal evidence on how the Dutch felt about the news of the massacre, but it offers telling insight. In the evening of 9 September 1655—the national day of prayer declared by the States General for the Waldensians—several Reformed and Catholics had ended up in a fight at the port of Leiden, which had evolved from a discussion between a

³⁷⁷ 'De ellende die gij in andere tijden hebt geleden, verzekert ons van uw christelijk mededoogen'; cited by Rogge, 'Vervolging der Waldenzen', 143.

³⁷⁸ D. van der Linden, 'Memorializing the wars of religion in early seventeenth-century French picture galleries. Protestants and Catholics painting the contested past', *Renaissance Quarterly* 70 (2017), pp. 169–170.

Catholic priest and a Reformed pastor about the Piedmont Easter.³⁷⁹ During the brawl one of the Catholic men, a local named Jan Practijck, had shouted that the ‘Geusen’ (‘Beggars’)—a term of abuse for Protestants—deserved ‘a blow in their vests like [they had in] Savoy’.³⁸⁰ Bailiff (*schout*) Gerard van Hoozeberg recounts in the city’s criminal verdict register that the crime

had not only been to the disadvantage of the true Christian Reformed Religion and [to] the disruption of the common peace of this state in general and the city in particular, but also to incite others to scheme evil deeds, with dangerous consequences which should under no circumstance be suffered in a well-off republic, but should be punished severely so as to deter.³⁸¹

The city tribunal (*vierschaar*) took the crime seriously and sentenced Practijck to a flogging and lifelong banishment from Holland. This sense of religious tension was shared by provincial authorities. When the States General ordered the provinces to raise funds for the persecuted on 18 June, discussions arose as to how collections should be organized. According to Aitzema it was feared that if one went from door to door and the non-Reformed refused to donate or gave less this would thus ‘cause bitterness and estrangement’.³⁸² Instead, it was considered more prudent for charity to be collected in the different churches, so that the churchgoers would be guided by what ‘God sent to people’s hearts’.³⁸³

Pamphlets of Dutch origin also connected events to the Dutch Republic’s own confessional landscape. About a month after the massacre, The Hague printer Hendrik Hondius III printed the *Brief van een protestant in Switserland geschreven aen een sijn spetiael vriend woonende in Hollant* (*Letter of a Protestant written in Switzerland to his special friend in Holland*), a pamphlet—as the title suggests—in the form of a letter from May 1655. Whether the letter

³⁷⁹ Crimineel klachtboek. Manuscript, Schepenbank (Oud rechterlijk archief), Criminele vonnisboeken, 1455–1811, 508, inv. nr. 3. Regionaal Archief Leiden, p. 186; I want to thank Christine Kooi for bringing this source to my attention.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ ‘[...] streckende niet alleen tot naedeel vande waere christelijcke gereformeerde religie ende stooringe vande gemeene ruste van desen staet int generael ende vandestadt leijden int particulier, maer oock tot ophitsinge van anderen, om quaede saecken voor te nemen, mitsgaeders van seer schadelijcken pernicieusen ende periculeusen gevolge die in een welgestelde Republijcke geensints geleden, maer anderen tot afschrick scherpelijck gestraft behoorden te werden; *ibid.*

³⁸² ‘[...] verbitteringh of verwyderingh soude veroorsaecken’; Aitzema, *Saken van staet*, vol. 3, p. 1229.

³⁸³ ‘[...] wat Godt een yeder in ‘t herte stuerde’; *ibid.*

had really originated as a part of private correspondence cannot be established, as both the author and the receiver remain anonymous. But the intended audience of the published pamphlet was clear; the letter is introduced with a short salutation to ‘the Christian reader’.³⁸⁴ The salutation explains that the purpose of the publication is to ‘express pity for the persecuted Christians, which the appendage of Rome has tried to mute by spreading guileful lies in this country’.³⁸⁵ The opposition between false information, consciously and maliciously spread in the United Provinces, and the truth as it was supposedly found in the letter, is remarkable, as there were—at least to our knowledge—no published works defending the persecution in circulation in the Republic at the time. The first (surviving) pamphlets in the United Provinces that outright defended the Savoyards did not appear until early August.³⁸⁶

Perhaps the pamphlet referred to rumor, communicated orally in the streets or in the Catholic community, like that which led to the banishment of *Practijck* in Leiden. But here too, we see that news about the Waldensians was premediated, as the pamphlet makes sense of events through the trope of ‘deceitful popery’. There was a widely shared belief among Protestants in the seventeenth century that Catholicism was an anti-religion, the absolute opposite and enemy of the true Church. The argument went that the Catholic Church’s very essence was to spread lies and disguise its intentions to destroy the Protestant world and replace it with anti-Christian tyranny.³⁸⁷ In the Dutch Republic anti-Catholicism was never as virulent as it was across the Channel; Catholics were structurally discriminated against, but not often actively persecuted.³⁸⁸ Yet in times of political crisis, Dutch Catholics were often regarded with

³⁸⁴ Anonymous, *Brief van een protestant in Switserland, gheschreven aen een zyn speciaal vriend woonende in Hollant, inhoudende een warachtigh verhael van een deel vande barbarysche wreetheyt ghedaen door de Savoyesen ende haren aenhangsel, tegen de arme Gereformeerde Kercken inde Valleye van Piedmont* (The Hague, 1655), pfl. 7621.

³⁸⁵ ‘[...] om met haer medelijden te hebben, ‘twelck het aenhangsel van Roomen heeft soecken te dempen door valsche leughenen, diese in dit Lant ghesaeyt hebben’; Anonymous, *Brief van een protestant*.

³⁸⁶ The two court-issued publications, the *Relatione de’ successi* and the *Somma delle ragioni*, were both published in Turin in mid-July, but must have taken at least two weeks to start circulating in the United Provinces, if they circulated there at all. The *Manifest of verhael van het bedrijf der Vaudoisen* did not appear until August (see Chapter 1).

³⁸⁷ P. Lake, ‘Anti-popery. The structure of a prejudice’, in R. Cust and A. Hughes (eds.), *Conflict in early Stuart England. Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–1642* (London, 1989), pp. 75–76.

³⁸⁸ Kooi, *Calvinists and Catholics*, pp. 90–129.

suspicion as a potential fifth column.³⁸⁹ Well into the eighteenth century, the United Provinces recurrently witnessed panics among Protestants about Catholics plotting to massacre them.³⁹⁰

Such conspiracy theories were, of course, predicated on a cultural memory of religious violence. Dutch Calvinists were familiar with the narratives about the Dutch Revolt, the religious wars in France, and, more recently, the 1641 Ulster massacres in Ireland. It was therefore not hard to imagine that the Catholic deceit that surrounded the Piedmont Easter was also known in the United Provinces. News about a foreign religious persecution turned such narratives into present realities. As such, the event provided an opportunity to discuss the Republic's confessional landscape within an ongoing public discussion. Since the authorities were involved and had encouraged public involvement, there was a relatively friendly climate to publicly discuss such issues.

The *Brief van een protestant in Switserland* is rather ambiguous in its observation about Dutch Catholics. The author argues that Catholics in the Netherlands, where 'they are forced to live among the people of our confession', might perhaps indulge in the same sort of cruelties under false pretexts as had happened in Piedmont.³⁹¹ However, he deems it to be unlikely, 'because the lies they forged will not damage the truth of the people close to these desolate places and have themselves heard it from the mouths of those who saw it'.³⁹² In other words, the international distribution of news about the event is deemed important not only for the sake of the persecuted in question, but also because of the hazardous consequences that false pretexts can have for the security of the Dutch Republic. As we have seen in Chapter 1, the Dutch pro-Savoyard *Manifest of verhael van het bedrijf der Vaudoisen* made a similar point, albeit in defense of the Savoyard court. The argument made in the *Brief van een protestant in Switserland* rests on the widely shared idea of Dutch Catholics as misinformed and susceptible to deceit,

³⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 58; E. Bergin, 'Defending the true faith. Religious themes in Dutch pamphlets on England, 1688–1689', in Onnekink (ed.), *War and religion after Westphalia*, p. 249.

³⁹⁰ J. Spaans, 'Violent dreams, peaceful coexistence. On the absence of religious violence in the Dutch Republic', *De zeventiende eeuw* 18 (2003), pp. 4–6; see also W.T.M. Frijhoff, 'De paniek van juni 1734', *Archief voor de katholieke geschiedenis van Nederland* 19 (1977), pp. 170–233.

³⁹¹ '[...] daer sy bedwongen zijn te leven onder 't volck van onse professie'; Anonymous, *Brief van een protestant*, p. 5.

³⁹² '[...] ende ick dencke niet dat hare ghesmeden leughen niet en sal beschadigen de waerheyt vande personen / die nae by de woeste plaetse zijn / en het selve gehoort hebben uyt den mondt vande gene die 'tgesien hebben / ende uyt de mondt vande gene die 'tgesien hebben'; ibid.

but not necessarily evil. Indeed, the author argues that ‘the best among the papists [are] ashamed of this barbaric cruelty’.³⁹³

Another originally Dutch pamphlet, the *Twee bedenckelijcke reden, uyt oorsaecke van de afgrijslijcke moordt der onnosele Waldensen* (*Two questionable reasons for the horrible murder of the innocent Waldensians*), argues in a similar fashion. The pamphlet uses the Piedmont Easter as a starting point to present a general treatise on the evil of popery and the need to ‘build an armada of more than a hundred thousand men against this common enemy’, a narrative in which the Waldensians take only a modest place.³⁹⁴ In the preface, however, the author admonishes the reader to be well disposed toward Catholic laymen, in the hope that they at some point see the light.³⁹⁵ Foreign popery may have been the main threat to Protestantism, but Catholics could still be won for the true religion.³⁹⁶ In short, we see that in Dutch appropriations, the massacre of the Waldensians becomes a reference point for discussions that transcend the specificity of the case. News about foreign religious persecutions turned old narratives into present realities. Since the States General was involved and had encouraged public involvement, it was fairly safe to publicize these issues.

In accordance with the idea of the Piedmont Easter as part of a bigger tale about the danger of Catholicism, the Dutch pamphlets are not only more decisively framed within the normative principle of religion. They also differ from Waldensian pamphlets in the kind of information they provide. Apart from a limited number of religious truth claims, the Waldensian pamphlets primarily purport to provide facts—in order to maintain their credibility and avoid further accusations of *lèse-majesté*. The Dutch pamphlets, on the other hand, do not contain lengthy legal discussions; the specificities and context of the violence inflicted by a foreign prince became irrelevant within their religious framing of events. Instead, Dutch pamphleteers provided rallying cries, albeit rather unspecific ones. Recontextualizing the Piedmont Easter in an eschatological framework, the Dutch authors leave aside the historical,

³⁹³ ‘De fijnste vande Papisten schamen haer van dese Barbarische wreetheyt’; *ibid.*

³⁹⁴ ‘[...] een armade van meer als hondert duysent man uyt maecken / teghens den al-gemeynen vyandt’; Anonymous, *Twee bedenckelijcke reden, uyt oorsaecke van de afgrijslijcke moordt der onnosele Waldensen* (s.l. 1655), pfl. 7636.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ Lake, ‘Anti-popery’, p. 83.

legal, and anecdotal specificities of the massacre. Instead, they tell a transcendental truth, urging good Christians to stand up and fight the Catholic threat.

The case of the Waldensians thus becomes a subchapter in what Tony Claydon calls the master narrative of confessional strife in Europe.³⁹⁷ This combination of exhortation and appeals to religious brotherhood is particularly visible in the pamphlet *Ephraim met Juda*, written by the orthodox Calvinist minister Jacobus Sceperus from Gouda. The full title translates as *Ephraim with Juda, which is England with Holland, showing that the unification of all Evangelical, Protestant, Reformed princes, states, and churches is a secure means of destroying the murderous covenant of the Papists, which they have endeavored as usual and now again against the Waldensians*. As the title suggests, the booklet is mainly concerned with the relationship between England and the Dutch Republic, as these countries had agreed on a peace the year before, after the first war between the two states (1652–54). In fact, *Ephraim met Juda* was a sequel to the 1653 *Manasse against Ephraim*, which Sceperus had written during the first Anglo-Dutch War.³⁹⁸

The *Ephraim met Juda* pamphlet aimed to counter the ideology of the Statist regime, which had abolished the institute of stadtholder after a failed coup d'état and sudden demise of William II, Prince of Orange. Statists, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, pursued a foreign policy based upon the principles of reason of state and mercantilism; national interest and the increase of state power revolved around economic expansion. Mercantile ideology dominated Dutch propaganda and fostered a sense of economic rivalry with England.³⁹⁹ Accordingly, few pamphleteers had advocated peace during the war.⁴⁰⁰

Sceperus countered this reason of state political maxim by comparing the Dutch with the Israelites, a chosen people who had fought against ungodly tyranny.⁴⁰¹ The idea of the

³⁹⁷ Claydon, *Europe and the making of England*.

³⁹⁸ J. Sceperus, *Manasse teegen Ephraim. dat is Engelandt teegen Hollandt* (Amsterdam, 1653), pfl 7436. In 1666 another follow-up pamphlet was published that commented on the second Anglo-Dutch War. J. Sceperus, *Juda en Israel teegens Benjamin mitsgaders Engelant teegen Hollant voorgesteld nyt Judic. 20, vers 27, 28* (Amsterdam, 1666), pfl 9389.

³⁹⁹ G. Rommelse, 'Mountains of iron and gold. Mercantilist ideology in Anglo-Dutch relations (1650–1674)', in D. Onnekink and G. Rommelse (eds.), *Ideology and foreign policy in early modern Europe (1650–1750)* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 243–266.

⁴⁰⁰ Helmers, *Royalist republic*, p. 12.

⁴⁰¹ See S. Schama, *The embarrassment of riches. An interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age* (London, 1987); C. Huisman, *Neerlands Israël. Het natiebesef der traditioneel-gereformeerden in de achttiende eeuw* (Dordrecht, 1983); Van der Steen, *Memory wars in the Low Countries*, pp. 75, 282, 288.

United Provinces as a ‘New Israel’ had often been used, but the author gave it a supranational spin by identifying the whole Protestant world as Israel. The individual Reformed states and communities constituted Israel’s tribes. Sceperus thus deploras the Anglo-Dutch War as a war between brothers—just like the long struggle between the tribes of Manasse and Ephraim. Both England and the United Provinces sucked on ‘the breasts of Zion with all the believers, becoming satiated and refreshed from the fullness of her glory’, making the war between them against God’s will.⁴⁰² In recent years, the pope had managed to pit Protestants against one another, first in Germany—during the Thirty Years’ War—and recently between England and the United Provinces. Rome could rest assured that these wars would do more harm to the Protestant cause than the Inquisition, gunpowder plots, and murder had ever done.⁴⁰³ Sceperus thus sketches the image of a civil war, a struggle ‘of the left arm, against the right one, of the throat against the stomach, of the stomach against the liver’.⁴⁰⁴ As such, ‘every gain was a loss and every victory was a defeat for the Reformed world’.⁴⁰⁵ To increase the work’s authority it was published with the stamp of approval of two preachers, who testified that the document was ‘deemed good, conforming to Scripture, and devotional’.⁴⁰⁶ This was done in accordance with the 55th Article of the Synod of Dordt, which forbade Reformed Protestants from publishing anything concerning religion that had not been approved by a Reformed theologian.⁴⁰⁷

Sceperus’ sectarian call for solidarity among the Protestant ‘tribes’ against the ungodly Catholic Church resembles the rhetoric used by Gisbertus Voetius, the most influential voice among the few Dutch supporters of the Parliamentarians during the English Civil War.⁴⁰⁸ The fact that Sceperus swam against mainstream Dutch public discourse about England should make us aware of a potential irony in the study of public opinion. As Helmer Helmers reminds

⁴⁰² ‘[...] suygen met alle geloovigen / aen eene brosten Zions, en worden sat, en verquicken ons aen de volheynt haerer heerlijckheynt’; Sceperus, *Manasse teegen Ephraim*, p. 5.

⁴⁰³ Sceperus, *Ephraim met Juda*, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁴ ‘[...] een krijgh van de slinker arm, teeghen de rechter; van de keel, teeghen de maeg; van de maeg, teegen de leever’; *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁰⁵ ‘[...] dat de winst hier verlies; en alle ooverwinninghe een neerlaeg voor de gereformeerde weereelt was’; *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ ‘[...] goedt, schrift–maetich, en stichtelijck bevonden’; *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ *Kercken–ordeninge; gestelt inde Nationalen Synode der Ghereformeerde Kercken / te samen beroepen / en gehouden by laste vande Hooghmo. Heeren Staten Generael van de Vereenighde Nederlanden binnen Dordrecht, inden Iare 1618. ende 1619* (Utrecht, 1620).

⁴⁰⁸ Helmers, *Royalist republic*, pp. 66–67.

us, the prevalence of one political take on events in the printed press might, in fact, reveal that it was the minority view, one of which people still needed to be convinced. Following this line of reasoning, the dominant view did not have to be defended through pamphlets.⁴⁰⁹ In this case it appears, however, that Sceperus strategically used the dominant sentiment concerning the Waldensians to foster a minority view on a different matter.

One may wonder at this point what remains of the humanitarian discourse in Dutch pamphlets. Interestingly, Sceperus at some point refers to the Duke of Alba—the military commander who was sent to pacify the Low Countries by Philip II and served as archnemesis in the stories the Dutch told each other about the Dutch Revolt ever since—as ‘a human without humanity’ and he recurrently refers to bloodthirst of the papists.⁴¹⁰ The author then proceeds to explain why the Savoyards took pains to have the massacre appear like a secular punishment. In the past, he argues, they had not held back from persecuting the Waldensians as heretics. However, times had changed and in this century, in which ‘the inquisition had become so hated and cursed by the world’, one would do better to persecute religious enemies as ‘mutineers, rebels, and insurgents’.⁴¹¹ The preacher believes that shame now guided Savoy, or at least the awe for Europe’s Reformed powers.⁴¹² Indeed, the Spaniards had similarly changed their policy during the Dutch Revolt in face of the international community:

First, they condemned all the inhabitants of the land to the flames as Beggars and heretics [...] But since this behavior of the Spaniards was horrible in the eyes of many princes and potentates in Europe, the false and evil duke of Alba demanded from the Dutch things with which they could not consent without losing their honor and oath, property and blood.⁴¹³

Having contextualized the persecution in this eschatological religious framework, as part of the enduring struggle between the true Reformed churches and the whore of Babylon,

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴¹⁰ ‘[...] een mensche sonder menschelijckheyt’; Sceperus, *Ephraim met Juda*, p. 41.

⁴¹¹ ‘Maer sulcx niet dervende nu doen in dese eeuwe / waer in de Inquisiti so gehaet en gevloecht is in de weerelt / wordt op haer den naem van muytijns, rebellen, weederspannige [gelegd]’; *ibid.*, p. 63.

⁴¹² Ibid., p. 64.

⁴¹³ ‘Eerst heeft men / door de Inquisiti, alle de inwoonderen des lants / als Geusen en ketteren ter vlamme gedoemt [...] Maer vemrits een sodaenich doen der Spangjaerden seer af-schouwelijk was in de oogen van veele princen en potentaten van Europa; so doet men / door eenen loosen en boosen *Duc d’Alba*, den Neerlanderen dingen vergen / die sy behoudens eer en eet / goet en bloet / niet toestemmen conden’; *ibid.*, p. 63.

Sceperus concludes his treatise with a rhetorical move not found in any of the other pamphlets, namely by making an explicit call:

Wake up all kings, princes, and states in Europe, which have the true restored religion and want to retain that in your countries [...] Wake up and set aside the differences in religion that have been driven hard for too long; Satisfy each other and unite [...] because if you will not harmonize [...] be assured that stinking holes and prisons will become the houses of your subjects; racks their beds, shackles their jewelry; tears their food and drink; transport and planting out in foreign countries [...] murder, burning, hanging, choking, decapitating, and drowning of fellow citizens will be the daily [...] spectacle.⁴¹⁴

Another opinion maker who preferred religious unity to dogmatic purity was Lieuwe van Aitzema, but he turned the whole argument around. The lion's share of the diplomat's ideas on religion and politics are found in his reflections on the Piedmont Easter. We have already seen that Aitzema believed that the Duke of Savoy, as the Waldensians' sovereign lord, had had every right to persecute them. From the perspective of the Waldensians, in turn, he argues that they had had no right to exist in the first place. Aitzema argues that even if the Waldensians had learned of the true religion when it was first brought to Italy, and had continued to follow it when Rome went astray, separating from the larger Church had been *ipso facto* wrong, as it had caused disunity within Christendom.

In the eyes of the ambassador, the whole Reformation had only led to continuous fracture. Even though all religions scream for unity, they only want it on their own terms.⁴¹⁵ Aitzema argues that ultimately only the pope could duly be lauded for keeping uniformity, concluding that the Waldensians have separated themselves from their princes 'for pedantry, and some ways of speaking [and] for the ceremonies that their sovereign approved of, like the

⁴¹⁴ 'Waeckt op alle coningen, princen, en staten in Europe, welcke den waeren christelijcken, herstelden gods-dienst hebt, en houden wilt in uwe landen [...] Waeckt op / set aen een zijde, die al te langh en hart ghedreevene Verschillen ontrent den gods-dienst. Bevreedigt, en vereenigt alle met malkanderen, ten minsten daer in, dat ghy ghelijckelijck de moort-messen afweert van de strotten en keelen uwer onderdaenen en geloofs-genooten. So ghy luyden niet eendrachtich wort / en yvert in desen / zijt verseeckert / dat stinckende gaeten en gevanckenissen sullen de Wooningen worden van uwe onderdaenen; pijn-bancken, haere bedden; boeyens, hare verciersselen; traenen, haere spijsse en dranck; vervoeringen en verplantingen in vremde landen [...] moorden, branden, hangen, verworgen, onthalsen, en verdrencken der meede-borgeren, sullen haere daegelijcxse schou-speelen en vertooningen zijn'; *ibid.*, p. 65.

⁴¹⁵ Aitzema, *Saken van staet*, vol. 3, pp. 1241–1242.

German princes and cities equally obliged their subjects to uniformity'.⁴¹⁶ This last observation is interesting, as it describes the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, the right of German princes to decide what religion would be allowed and practiced in their lands. Aitzema makes no mention, however, of the recent Peace of Westphalia, which built upon the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, but had extended the rights of dissidents against their rulers; the peace had used the religious landscape of the 'standard year' 1624 as a benchmark; all religious privileges held by a religious group at this moment would be maintained or be restored. Moreover, the peace adopted the principle of freedom of conscience. As such, the prince's *ius reformandi*—the right to enforce his religion on his subjects—had become considerably limited.⁴¹⁷

Aitzema must have been well acquainted with these extensions of religious toleration, but they did not serve his point about the importance of religious uniformity and a state church. Like Sceperus, Aitzema framed the Waldensian question as one of the many faces of a larger European religio-political problem. Both ultimately did so to make a point about domestic politics, leading them to care more about the message than about the details of Europe's religio-political landscape that were used to support that message.

Conclusion

'Caro fratello Francesco, benvenuto', were the warm words with which Pastor Paolo Ribet welcomed Pope Francis I into his community's temple in Turin on 21 June 2015. Francis I thus became the first pontiff to visit a Waldensian church.⁴¹⁸ The ceremony held in the church was a reckoning with the past. 830 years after Rome had excommunicated the Waldensians as heretics the pope asked for forgiveness for the heavy persecutions they had suffered since:

⁴¹⁶ '[...] om eenige neuswijsheydt / ende manieren van spreecken / [en] om de ceremonien die haer souverain goedt vondt / gelijk de Duytsche Rijcxvorsten / ende steden elck hare onderdanen desghelijcks obligeerden tot uniformiteyt'; *ibid.*, p. 1243.

⁴¹⁷ See R. Asch, 'Religious toleration, the Peace of Westphalia and the German territorial estates', *Parliaments, Estates & Representation* 20–1 (2000), pp. 75–89; B. Straumann, 'The Peace of Westphalia (1648) as a secular constitution', *Constellations* 15–2 (2008), pp. 173–188.

⁴¹⁸ "'Caro fratello Francesco, benvenuto". il saluto dei Valdesi al Papa. Bergoglio. "Vi chiedo perdono per ciò che Chiesa vi ha fatto", *La Repubblica*, 22 June 2015, http://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/06/22/news/il_papa_a_torino_per_ka_prima_volta_nella_storia_n_el_tempio_valdese-117406386/.

Reflecting on the history of our relations, we cannot but grieve in front of the disputes and the violence committed in the name of our faith. [...] On the part of the Catholic Church, I ask you forgiveness for the non-Christian, even non-human, attitudes and behaviors that, in history, we have had against you. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us.⁴¹⁹

Rejecting persecution as inhumane is not a modern invention. As this chapter has shown, one argumentative strategy used by the Waldensians was very similar to the humanitarian vocabulary of Francis I. The Waldensians advocated their cause abroad mainly with recourse to two normative principles: rule of law and humanity. On the one hand, they hoped for international help, which required them to prove their alleged innocence of rebellion. Hence, they painstakingly elaborated on the legal details of their relationship with their ruler. On the other hand, they aimed for the widest possible denunciation of the massacre. This was possible with an inclusive language of atrocity, which focused on human rather than religious suffering. Although this narrative certainly tapped from a transnational cultural repertoire that had developed in the sixteenth century, the wars of religion were absent as explicit reference points. This deconfessionalized communication of religious persecution was politically prudent. Not only had the Waldensians found shelter in the French Dauphiné, they had also realized that their closest allies, the Reformed Swiss, had become extremely wary of religious conflict.

The persecuting party, by contrast, had initially communicated the conflict for domestic propaganda within the normative principles of religion, structuring it as a victory of the true Church over heresy. However, there had been no political incentive to internationally publicize what had happened in valleys of Piedmont. When the court of Savoy began to realize that they were losing an internationalized propaganda war their policy turned and they adopted a similar deconfessionalized rhetorical strategy to the one used by the Waldensians, with appeals to the normative principles of rule of law and humanity. In short, both the insurgents and the authorities applied secular strategies when appealing to an unspecified international audience.

⁴¹⁹ [...] riflettendo sulla storia delle nostre relazioni, non possiamo che rattristarci di fronte alle contese e alle violenze commesse in nome della propria fede. [...] Da parte della Chiesa Cattolica vi chiedo perdono per gli atteggiamenti e i comportamenti non cristiani, persino non umani che, nella storia, abbiamo avuto contro di voi. In nome del Signore Gesù Cristo, perdonateci'; 'Papa Francesco ai valdesi. "Perdonateci per le violenze commesse contro di voi"', 22 June 2015, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/06/22/papa-francesco-ai-valdesi-perdonateci-per-le-violenze-commesse-contro-di-voi/1801878/>.

This does not mean that they did not perceive the persecutions within a normative religious framework. But they understood that appeals to religion were impractical in an international setting. This suggests that the secularization of normative principles is not solely a consequence of changing views about the relation between religion and politics. Instead, using secular political languages was a strategic necessity to establish questions of (in)justice on an international and therefore multiconfessional stage.

This led to a remarkable dynamic. In bookshops Dutch people could buy the printed disputes between a faraway prince and his subjects. To account for their international readership, both these parties appealed to secular normative principles. Dutch pamphleteers subsequently built upon these works but ‘reconfessionalized’ the conflict, using the massacre to discuss domestic issues about religion and politics—appealing to the normative principle of religion. We thus see that international players had access to the United Provinces’ public sphere, but much of the momentum depended on the Dutch giving a domestic spin to the story, connecting faraway politics with local hopes and fears. In the next chapter, we will explore whether this combination of foreign initiative and Dutch appropriation was necessary for a persecution to be featured in the United Provinces’ discussion culture.

