THE MASSACRE IN HISTORY

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Chapter 3

Hidden Transcripts

Secret Histories and Personal Testimonies of Religious Violence in the French Wars of Religion

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'Massacre' first gained its modern meaning as a word in sixteenth-century France. Up to the 1540s, it had been the word used for the butcher's chopping block; and the butcher's knife was the 'massacreur'. In 1545, however, the judges of the sovereign court of Provence undertook a campaign of religious cleansing, stripping heretics out of the region of Mérindol, Cabrières and the surrounding districts, which had long been refuges for Waldensian communities. It was one of numerous provincial campaigns to extirpate the growing Protestant heresy from the body of traditional France in the 1540s and 1550s. In a famous pamphlet, however, it was referred to as 'un massacre', and the term stuck.[1] Writing later, Calvin's successor Beza described 'the savage massacre that the judges at Aix perpetrated upon the Waldensian brethren ... not upon one or two individuals but upon the whole population, without distinction of age or sex, burning down their villages as well'.[2] It became the peculiarly (though not uniquely) Protestant term for the popular sectarian hatreds which would be the bloody litany of the French civil wars of the second half of the century, culminating, of course, in the most spectacular moment, the ecktype massacre, that of St Bartholomew, in August 1572.[3] It was from France that the term entered the English political vocabulary, not least through the appearance of translated French Protestant pamphlets and Sylvester's metrical version of Salluste du Bartas' *Divine Weekes and Workes*.[4] 'The bloodie massacre at Paris'

was the familiar way of referring to the St Bartholomew's Day massacre by the end of the century at the time of the publication of Christopher Marlowe's play.[5]

It is not difficult to delineate some of the chronology and even the common features of this period of sectarian hatred, common features which are doubtless not unique to sixteenth-century France. Firstly, there were clearly defined cycles of sectarian violence, running out of phase with the more formal militarized conflicts of the civil wars themselves. So the periods of greatest sectarian tension on the streets of Paris, and provincial cities like Rouen, Lyon, Troyes and Dijon, tended to occur just prior to, and on the eve of, the more formal periods of warfare: in 1561-2, 1567-8, 1572 and then, finally, in 1588-9.[6] Secondly, the sectarian tensions were inevitably most bloody in those communities where the two religions, Catholic and Protestant, were mixed. The scale and intensity of the massacres tended to decrease markedly after 1577 because, in so many French cities, particularly of northern France, the Protestant minority had been forced out of town or become an insignificant force. It was still one which could be taunted, or treated as a scapegoat for the ills of the community at large; but it was no longer capable of putting up much of a fight. Thirdly, there were familiar patterns to the diffusion of sectarian violence both across a city and from one city to another. There were copycat incidents, the most famous of which involved the massacre of St Bartholomew itself which, as the nineteenth-century French historian Michelet pointed out was 'une saison de la Saint-Barthélemy', encompassing a score of provincial cities in the two months following the events in Paris.[7]

There was also a degree of stereotyping of responses amongst the massacring mobs as well as from amongst the sometimes complicit municipal authorities. So certain streets were well known as the battle-zones for the enactment of religious violence, each one a 'Shankill Rd' (to draw on the contemporary resonances of sectarian tension in Northern Ireland) for the local inhabitants: the rue Moyenne in Troyes, or the rue du Taur in Toulouse.[8] Certain quarters of particular cities became the 'Bogsides' of provincial France: the quartier Hugon of Tours (which may have given its name to the 'Huguenots'); the riverside quartier dominated by the cutlers in Toulouse, or the parish of St Eloi in Rouen; the quartier bourg St Michel in Paris, close by the quartier Latin.[9] In many cities, the first sectarian troubles gave rise to lists of proscribed Protestants, suspects who would be regularly rounded up in subsequent periods of tension, their property sequestered, their friends investigated, actions by municipal authorities which were part and parcel of the rituals attached to sectarian incidents in the French civil wars.[10] The

edicts of pacification (1563; 1570; 1576; 1577; 1598) provided the Protestant minority with guaranteed places of worship, generally well outside the walls of major cities in northern France. This, however, resulted in the Protestants being particularly exposed as they made their way to and from the services or *prêches* on Sundays, a slow-moving procession and target for popular vengeance. So, in Troyes, Rouen, Paris and elsewhere north of the Loire, the typology of massacres was subtly modified by edicts whose ostensible objective was to prevent their occurrence.

The most notable common feature of the French massacres has been, however, the ritual objects of violence – such as those identified by Natalie Zemon Davis in a notable article, first published in 1973.[11] She indicated how very wide the range of sectarian incident could be, partly because the possibilities of sacral offence could be generously conceived; whether it was taunting a priest, ridiculing a monk, mocking a religious procession, throwing mud against a statue, desecrating a font or destroying an altar. Although she has been criticized for overstating the ritual of purification to be found within the French massacres, there is no doubt that she was right to stress the asymmetry between the ritual massacral space afforded by the traditional religion and the lack of ritual objectives provided by the reformed religion. She cites the Protestant *Histoire Ecclésiastique des églises réformées* ..., published in 1581, as asserting that 'those of the Reformed Religion made war only on images and altars, which do not bleed, while those of the Roman religion spilled blood with every kind of cruelty'.[12] Whilst she accepts that there were numerous distinctions to be drawn, 'nevertheless, when all this is said, the iconoclastic Calvinistic crows still come out as the champions in the destruction of religious property', whilst 'in bloodshed, the Catholics are the champions'.

A more sophisticated explanation for this asymmetry has recently been advanced by the French historian, Denis Crouzet, in his monumental book *Les Guerriers de Dieu*.[13] Crouzet seeks to explain the distinctively different attitudes to religious violence amongst Catholics and Protestants in the wars of religion. To do so, he immersed himself in the printed literature, particularly the pamphlets and broadsheet collections of the *Bibliothèque Nationale*. What he discovered in this literature was a powerful strand of apocalyptic and prophetic forces supporting the traditional Catholic religion at the popular level from the earliest decades of the French reformation. For Crouzet, the notion that the world would shortly come to an end was part of a belief system in which holy power was immanent, engaged mystically and prophetically in a mighty struggle against the forces of darkness. Everything in the world, spatially

and temporally, had sacral significance. For traditional Catholics the novelty of heresy 'on the doorstep', within their midst as it were, was yet one more sign, alongside portents in the skies, monstrous births and miracles, of the imminent end of the world. To fight the heretics, to massacre and to destroy them, says Crouzet, was not just a desire to purify the world from the pollution of heresy; it was a more fundamental desire to be the conduit of God's wrath and to become part of God's immanence in the Last Days. The Old Testament provided a lexicon of language, symbols and gestures with which to evoke this immanence. So, innocent children were reported as playing a prominent part in the stomach-turning popular violence of the civil wars because they were seen as Christ-like bearers of God's blessing in the Last Days. Far from reflecting a 'natural' violence to be expected in sixteenth-century societies, the popular bloodshed of the civil wars took place in moments, according to Crouzet, of abnegation of society, when individuals were engaged in a sacral act. Hence the particularly gruesome cruelty meted out towards Protestants, the perverted mutilation of their bodies after their death. This was not sadism as we might understand it. Rather, the heretics were nonhumans, diabolic agents, and their pursuants were God's secret, avenging angels.

Huguenot propaganda, by contrast, sought to undermine the hidden agenda of Catholic violence by suggesting that it arose from profanity. Its perpetrators lusted after Protestant wealth and Protestant offices. Their motives were base and their emotions perverted. Their violence was a sign of a negation of God, rather than his immanence. Yet there was a calvinist violence too, although its psychological roots were different. It was human, rationalistic, cool – calculated and targeted to achieve a total Protestant reformation. Their first attack was upon images because calvinists did not accept the semiotics of Catholic holy power. Images were not the embodiment of God's immanence in this world. They were idols, profaning and desecrating His sovereign majesty. They had to be destroyed and, although in northern France iconoclasm remained at an elementary stage of gesture, in southern France it was more systematic, paralysing the lawcourts which sought to control it. Then came an iconoclasm towards other aspects of holy power. Preachers were interrupted during sermons, clergy were mocked in the streets and Catholic processions were held up to ridicule. Dislike and fear of priestly power was revealed in satirical broadsheets. The Roman church was portrayed as a world of 'fools', 'dogs', 'beasts', 'ravening wolves'. The priests, their animal lusts mocked before the public, were the inevitable victims, and the gruesome rituals of their

suffering – disembowelling a speciality – took on the gestures and images appropriate to their circumstances.

Let us, without going at this stage into further detail, accept that, for whatever reasons, there was an asymmetry in the attitudes to religious violence in the French sectarian violence of the wars of religion between Catholics and Protestants. There is, however, another, and more fundamental, element of asymmetry and this is in respect of the evidence which we have of these massacres. On the one hand, there was a good deal of published printed propaganda relating to the events which occurred within French provincial cities and in Paris during this period. The first so-called massacre of the civil war period, that which occurred at Vassy in March 1562, was itself the object of various contemporary printed pamphlets.[14] There were numerous local incidents written up after the event, by one side or the other.[15] Many of these became the basis for compilations of massacre tales and stories, such as those which filled the later editions of Jean Crespin's Protestant martyrology, the already-cited *Histoire ecclésiastique* and other anthologies of such publications.[16] The hand of the energetic Genevan-based Simon Goulart (the Elder) is to be seen amongst many of those prepared amongst the Protestants. But the existence of these anthologies indicates that these pamphlets had a more enduring readership than we might imagine.[17] Such accounts of course each proclaimed themselves to be a 'true history' or a 'true account'; and each sought to dismiss the claims of the other side as to who had started the massacre and what its true intentions and purposes were, whilst advancing its own explanation for events.[18] They claim to reveal the secret intentions of the actors in the events, to spill the beans as to the secret political intentions of the participants, or the parties manipulating the events from a distance. As Simon Goulart said in his preface to the *Mémoires de l'Estat*:

> The memory of the massacres committed in several cities of France in the months of August and September of 1572, engraved in the hearts of an infinite number of men, made many wish that the treachery of the authors of these massacres not remain hidden in the shadows of forgetfulness and that the executioners of these abominable cruelties be punished as they deserved. So when it pleases God to bring us a good peace in which justice may be done, good people hope that innocent blood, spilled with such inhumanity, will win vengeance on the guilty. As for those who already by death have escaped from human punishment, or others who in various ways escape in the future, clearly people must be informed of what they did.[19]

So it is in these pamphlets that we find the well-articulated explanatory frameworks which became the focal points for later historical

debate. The Duke of Guise has a secret aim to eliminate protestantism from the kingdom. The Prince of Condé has a plot to subvert the French monarchy and is using the Protestants to further his aims. The queen mother has an agenda all of her own to protect her sons and preserve the authority of the monarchy at no matter what cost to the nation. The seeds for the elaborate 'metahistory' of the massacre of St Bartholomew were already laid in the decade of sectarian tension before 1572 and the highly publicized debate which each successive cycle of incidents aroused.

We shall return to some aspects of the construction of this 'metahistory' later. Despite what Goulart claimed in his preface, however, the fact is that these were generally histories without actors – sometimes even without events described in a detailed form. They are detached and at several removes from the massacres which had actually taken place and the *dramatis personae* who had witnessed them. In these accounts, the question of what actually happened is subordinated to questions of why, and of whom to blame. Those descriptions which we do possess are second or third hand, manipulated and doctored for public consumption in various ways, and influenced by the accumulated stereotypes of how heretics in the Middle Ages had been expected to manifest themselves, or how the suffering martyrs of the early church had behaved in subtle fashions which are not easily taken into account. This is particularly so of the notorious massacre of St Bartholomew. Without exception, the contemporary published accounts which appeared in the few years after 1572 seek to exemplify the killing in varieties of familiar topoi: the patient, stoic Protestant magistrate, the corrupt and base-motivated assassin, etc. They explain the events as the responsibility of a young and weak king, unable to control his council, or the Machiavellian machinations of a wicked Jezebel of a queen mother, Catherine de Medici, who would stop at nothing to reinforce and sustain her authority over her son Charles IX, or the cynical plotting of a grandee, especially the Duke of Guise and his faction, or again the manipulations of a distant foreign power (Spain). The 'evidence' (such as it is) is generally so far removed from what actually happened, that it is, in one respect or another, almost always unsatisfactory. This is reflected in the ongoing debate about the responsibility for the massacre of St Bartholomew which has received additional recent supplies of popular oxygen from the success of the film *La Reine Margot*, with its replication of the conventional nineteenth-century *argot* account of Alexandre Dumas.[20] It is therefore impossible to use such evidence without substantial reserve and qualification as accurate accounts of what actually went on; since 'true histories' or 'summary and true discourses' is what they signally fail to provide.

For this reason, we need to pay more attention to the 'hidden transcripts' of the massacres, the personal testimonies, the secret histories of what went on, and to why there are (relatively) so few of them. They will not enable us to resolve the problems posed by the printed pamphlet evidence, but they will enable us to explain more clearly why they should not be expected to do so. By letting these more personal and individual testimonies speak for themselves in their more unguarded ways, we shall be able to learn more about the asymmetries of evidence which are fundamental to the limits of our understanding of them. The term 'hidden transcripts' is the one used by James C. Scott to describe the gossip, the stories, the gestures, the rituals used by the poor peasants of south-east Asia when talking about their lords and masters.[21] Such 'hidden transcripts' provide a measure of independence from the authority of their lords, and thus a degree of validation for themselves and their condition. The accounts of Huguenot victims who survived the massacres and were prepared to tell the tale of what they had seen and heard was not merely marked by a surprising independence (and hostility) towards established (especially princely) authority. They also reflected the networks of internal support and communication, of economic and psychological sustenance, which sustained the Huguenot remnants, especially after the massacre of St Bartholomew.

The first example of a personal testimony from a survivor is the tale of Jean de Mergey, a companion of François, Count of La Rochefoucauld.[22] Like many others, he survived by means of disguise and deception; by becoming other than he was. At the same time, he drew upon the multiple resources of clients and friends to secure his protection. La Rochefoucauld himself had been killed in the massacre, but his son (M. de Marcillac) had, like many of the survivors, found unexpected refuge in the house of one of the most extreme Catholics, someone who happened to be his kinsman, the sieur de Lansac. Jean de Mergey sent letters to Lansac's house on the rue Saint-Honoré asking to be rescued. For Mergey it was a miracle that his letters got through, for Lansac kept his house tightly barred and guarded during the events of the massacre. The first missive was refused by the porter and the second had to be sent almost as a secret message. They eventually met up, with a Catholic gentleman sent to give Mergey cover. He arrived at Mergey's door and said 'in a rude and threatening voice: "allons"'. Mergey's first thought was that he was about to be assassinated and he drew his sword. Once his fears were overcome, he was escorted to the relative safety of the rue Saint-Honoré. But, in Mergey's account, it is when he finally met up with Marcillac which he remembered most. For both men, the emotional tensions of the previous three days of

massacre around them welled up along with their shared sense of an experience which could bear no discussion, and a solidarity which was born out of their anguish: Marcillac 'on seeing me threw his arms round my neck, holding me in this embrace for a long time, without saying a single word, with tears and sighs, and I the same'. This was what most stuck in Mergey's memory, the moment when he awoke from the trauma of the preceding events which he had more or less elided from his consciousness. Of the events themselves, he tells us almost nothing.

For Maximilien de Béthune, writing some thirty years after the events which he had experienced aged eleven-and-a-half, it is perhaps not surprising that the memory had faded.[23] Like Jean de Mergey and Marcillac, he was in Paris in 1572 to celebrate the marriage of Henri de Navarre to Marguerite of Valois, the famous 'noces brulantes' which was the prelude to the St Bartholomew massacre. He remembered being left alone by his governor and his tutor, whom he never saw again. He recalled shouts, the sound of the tocsin, and lots of confusion. He remembered deciding to try to make it from the rue de Reims to the collège de Bourgogne, not far away, where he knew he would be able to meet up with some school friends. He put on his school uniform and tucked a Book of Hours under his arm. He was stopped three times along the way by soldiers who expressed astonishment when he said that he was going to school. Of the scenes of carnage which he witnessed, he would only say that he remembered as though it were yesterday hearing 'the streets incessantly reverberating with these cries: "Kill, kill the Huguenots", and the clamour of those being murdered.' When he finally arrived at the college, he remembered having to bribe the porter to let him in and the fear of the college principal who told him that he had heard the rumour that they wanted to kill all the Protestants 'even infants at the breast, and Catholic women who were known to be pregnant by a Huguenot, on the model of the Sicilian Vespers against the French'. And here he firmly closes the door on further reminiscence – a childhood memory only half-opened up for investigation. But then, it was not altogether prudent for a minister of the first Bourbon king in the years after the civil wars to dwell too much on what had happened in the recent, turbulent past. That king was devoted to erasing the turbulent past, selectively and prudently shaping it to his own purposes. Here is one of the most remarkable features of the French civil wars; that individuals carried with them their memories, and knew that others with whom they had daily dealings, did so too. Leading massacrers, perhaps, saluted politely those who had seen members of their family suffer or their property sequestered; and yet, about such

memories, all parties judged it best to remain silent, seeking (for all sorts of reasons public and private) to internalize them. Jacques-Auguste de Thou, for example, writing over thirty years after the events of 1572, elaborates the history of one of the massacrers, a member of the Paris militia, ensign Thomas Croizier (or Crozier). De Thou explains that he had often heard Croizier, a 'murderer deserving the scaffold', hold his hand up, 'raise his arm with inhuman vanity', and boast 'that he had killed more than four hundred men with this arm in the carnage' of Paris.[24] Even in this apparently personal reminiscence, however, things are not exactly as they might appear. Barbara Diefendorf, who has carefully examined the testimony and compared it with the other accounts of Croizier's exploits given by Goulart and by Crespin, notes that de Thou had every reason to want to paint Croizier in as black a light as possible.[25] He made him responsible for the death of the *parlementaire* judge Jacques Rouillard, and portrays him as personally cutting off the magistrate's head after toying with him as to whether he was going to die or not. The other accounts, however, claim that de Thou's own father, Christophe, was the instigator of Rouillard's death on the grounds that he (Rouillard) was an independent-minded judge who was pursuing a case of fraud against a fellow-judge who happened to be de Thou's close friend. De Thou, therefore, had every reason to want to find a scapegoat in his history for this assassination and Croizier provided a convenient name and face. The testimony is valuable, however, as a reminder of the way in which the continuing memories of the massacres interwove themselves into a metahistory of what had happened, even in the minds of individuals who had been present at the time.

Some Protestants interpreted their survival as an example of God's mysterious and remarkable secret providence. This was how Jacques de Caumont, another Gascon noble cadet like Marcillac, interpreted what had happened to him in Paris in August 1572.[26] He had expected to be part of the Protestant army and his first reaction to the bloody events unfolding before him had been to want to join what Protestant contingent would be formed to protect themselves. But his efforts were forestalled by a brother who was recovering from illness and whom he felt he could not leave. So he remained in his lodgings. He saw the Catholic troops batter down the door and pillage their property. He saw his father offer his own life providing that his sons were spared. He remembered a king's ransom being negotiated for his life (2,000 *écus*) before being led downstairs and ordered to tear his handkerchief into strips to make the sign of the cross which would be then pinned to his hat as a protection for him as he negotiated his way through the Paris mob.

They managed to reach the Louvre, which was where Caumont remembered the moment of his greatest fear: 'they fully believed that they were to be dispatched; because they saw many of their religion killed and thrown into the Seine, which in many places was already red with blood, they saw many dead bodies, including that of the sieur de Piles'. From there they were led by their Catholic captain to a safe house. Held captive by some Swiss soldiers, they waited until the ransom could be raised from amongst their kinsmen. They did not attempt to escape, or to evade their captors. The word of honour of a gentleman had been given and, in any case, Caumont's father declared that he was too old to do other than to be 'resolved to await God's providence, who will dispose of us according to His will'. Such passivity is common amongst Huguenot victims; it is as though they were complicit actors in the drama which was unfolding around them. For Diefendorf, there was much in the Huguenots' particular understanding of God's protection, their reading of the Bible (especially the Psalms) and their experience of the earlier civil wars, to explain this passivity. But, again, we must remember that so many of our examples of it come from the indirect and 'fashioned' accounts of the experience of massacre, designed to present to us a particular picture of Protestant endurance. However, in the case of the Caumonts, this was not the end of the story because, on the Tuesday morning, they were told that they were wanted for questioning by the king's brother, Henri de Valois, Duke of Anjou. They had their capes, hats and bonnets stripped from them and set out, accompanied by a lackey, to return to the Louvre, with the streets around it surrounded by soldiers. Suddenly and without warning, the soldiers cried '"Kill! Kill!"' 'First of all the eldest of the children was stabbed several times, crying as he fell:"Oh, my God! I am dead."' His father turned to try and help his eldest son, but was himself set upon and stabbed, falling on top of him. Jacques:

> covered in blood, but miraculously not wounded, cried too, as if inspired by heaven: "I am dead!", and at the same time fell between his father and his brother, and whilst on the ground, received yet more fierce blows, though not even his skin was pierced. God protected him so visibly that although the murderers robbed and stripped them, they never realised that one of them was not even injured.

There he remained until the end of the afternoon, his face on the ground, in his shirt-sleeves, lying beside his dead father and brother, until a groundsman from a tennis court tried to take his shirt off him and turned him over. 'Seeing him so young, he cried out: "Alas! This one's only a poor child. What a terrible shame, what could he

have done wrong?"'. Encouraged by this expression of sympathy, Jacques de Caumont blinked and shook his head to indicate that he was not dead and the man pushed him back down on the ground, hissing that he wasn't to make a move 'because they're still here'. He returned somewhat later, put a cape around his shoulders and lifted him to his feet. He pretended to kick him and make him walk ahead of him. Some of the bystanders asked him what he was doing. 'Oh! This is only my little nephew who is drunk', he said. 'I'm taking him back to give him a good hiding'. He was led by the linesman back to his house, was given a back room and a straw mattress, and forced to part with the three jewels which he possessed. He was then given a disguise and only then, on Wednesday 27 August, did he finally make his escape.

Writing in 1595 for the benefit of her son, Philippe, the story of Charlotte Arbaleste's time in Paris in 1572 was told within the same Calvinist pieties; but, through them, an extraordinary tale emerges.[27] She wanted her son to learn, mark and inwardly digest her own life-story, just as she had done that of her father and her husband, both of whom were dead by the time of the massacre of St Bartholomew. Indeed, she was in Paris to settle the remnants of their affairs at the time that the massacre took place. In bed when her maid brought her first word of what was going on outside – things can scarcely have begun – she went to the window of her lodging to look out onto the rue Saint-Antoine and saw the town-guard and a crowd assembling, everyone with the (Catholic) white crosses in their hats. She recalled the confused succession of news as it became daylight, especially that of the death of her brother, one of the Admiral Coligny's adherents. Her main thoughts were for her three-and-a-half-year old daughter whom she despatched with a maid to the comparative safety of a relative, M. de Perreuze, living not far away in the rue Vieille-du-Temple. She followed later, leaving her house not long before a contingent arrived to look for her, and ransack it. They did not need long to work out where she might have gone and she resorted to hiding in a loft, from where, wondering whether they included those of her own child, she could make out the 'strange cries of men, women and children who were being massacred in the streets'. For a week, she led a shadowy, hidden existence, sheltering where she could, spending one night in the house of the captain of the watch and ward, a leading figure in the massacres. On Monday 2 September, she made her escape from Paris, dressed as a common wench, on a boat destined for Sens. Even then, her disguise evidently could not cover her accent, background and evident fear. When asked for a passport (which she did not have) 'they began to say to me that I was a Huguenot and that I would have to be killed'. It

required the testimony of one of her friends in high places and the quick-wittedness of a good woman who stood up for her, before she could proceed on a journey with more frightening incidents until she finally reached the safety of Sedan.

These accounts of survivors are fascinating (and there are others which might also be cited – Charlotte d'Arbaleste's future husband, Philippe du Plessis Mornay, for example, or Renée Burlamachi), but not in the way that we might expect. They tell us remarkably little about the massacre of St Bartholomew itself. Their protagonists were too young, too frightened, too surprised or too hidden to have any general perspective on what was happening around them. They provide us with fragments of history, fractions of reality which we (any more than they) cannot piece into a whole. Individuals could neither explain to themselves or to others, the curious mixture of events in which they had been involved. They could not provide any sense of the larger picture; how many had been killed in Paris during the three days of St Bartholomew; how it had all started, and why. Denis Crouzet cites a contemporary verse which struggles with this perplexing ignorance:[28]

> Numbering the dead
> Is an impossibility.
> Endless, ceaseless the bodies
> During the terrible fury.
> Men as well as women
> Bundled into the river
> To carry the news
> Boatless to Rouen.

They could not even explain adequately to themselves the paradoxes of the affronts which they experienced to all known sociabilities, deferences, ways of behaviour. Nor could they account for the curious, unknown, inexplicable acts of kindness, common humanity and decency which also happened to them, and which had helped to save them. Above all, they had no means of explaining to others, in language which could possibly convey it, the full emotional intensity of what they had experienced. 'Incredible' and 'extraordinary' rival 'inhumane' 'barbarous', 'barbarism', 'butchery' and 'massacre'; but they barely served the turn. The reality could be measured only in impression and poetic reality. The scale of things, for example, was to be conveyed by the colour of the river Seine, turned to red by the number of bodies dumped in the river. To re-present the reality was to testify to a horrible dream, where reality seemed no longer what it had been, or what it should be:[29]

> By the Gods, what is before my eyes? Is it not some dream
> Which makes me slumber and imagine something untrue?
> Have I really seen this trouble, or rather is it true
> That all those here mentioned have felt the dread
> But equitable hand of the great God, the Father
> Of all that is here below ...?

For the survivors, in any case, the emphasis was as much upon the sense of relief and release once they had escaped to comparative safety as upon witnessing to what they had experienced in Paris.

The Protestant survivors from the St Bartholomew massacre in Paris were, in any case, not in any state to tell their story immediately afterwards. It is no coincidence that all four of the testimonies which we have alluded to come from accounts at least twenty-five years after the events they are describing. An equivalent lapse of time has been noted for many victims of the Holocaust in our own century. Some were doubtless heavily traumatized. Poor little Gillette Le Mercier, for example, was forced (according to Crespin) to witness the execution of her parents before being 'baptized' in their blood during the massacre in Paris. Her tormenters issued the horrible threat that, if she ever became a Huguenot, 'the same would happen to her'. In a petition, filed before the courts on 28 February 1573, she is described as a 'poor little girl unable to speak'.[30] There must have been many who were incapable, if not of speaking, at least in the short term, of contemplating what they had witnessed, and who elided it from their immediate consciousness. There were prudential as well as deeper reasons, in any case, for keeping quiet. The Protestants had relied on their private networks of support and sustenance during the early civil wars. It was only amongst friends of the faith that they had really trusted themselves to speak. And, at least in northern France, many of those networks were cut away by the massacres of 1572. Even this private world (our testimonies all come from the relative security of exile in Sedan, in Geneva, or in the Midi) found it difficult to confront the uncomfortable reality – which was that the Protestants, on the whole, had not fought back and resisted massacre; and, more serious still, that many of their coreligionists had decided to convert back to catholicism in the wake of St Bartholomew. For those that abjured, their survival of the massacre represents nothing if not their humiliation. Hugues Sureau du Rosier, writing from the position of one who had abjured only to reconvert once more thereafter, put it like this: it was 'evidence of the indignation of God, as if he had declared by this means that he detested and condemned the profession and exercise of our religion ..., as if he wished entirely to ruin this church

and favour instead the Roman'.[31] The amnesia of silence prevented their recalling this particular wrath of God.

Amongst Catholics, too, there is an equivalent absence of direct testimony, albeit for somewhat different reasons. The butchers themselves, for evident reasons, kept quiet. What would induce them, beyond the folly of bravura, to lay themselves open to possible revenge attack, if not legal recrimination? One of the most striking features of the troubles on French streets in the civil wars is how few names one can put to the faces of the Catholic crowd in comparison with the vulnerable, exposed specificity of the Protestants involved. As Barbara Diefendorf points out for Paris, we know the details of only a handful of individuals for the events of 1572. The same asymmetry is, incidentally, to be noted in Crespin's martyrology for the riots or other incidents which occurred during the trial and executions of heretics before 1560 and in the early 1560s.

For the notables, there were some who faced the wall, locked, bolted and guarded the doors, and waited for the fury to subside. Jacques-Auguste de Thou, for example, reported that he spent most of the days during and after the massacre shut up in the family home, afraid to go out because the sight of blood made him physically sick.[32] In those cases where there was some warning of the sectarian tensions to come, some notables, both Catholics and Protestants, found it convenient to head for their country estates and await better times.[33]

Local notables had also little to be proud of during these disturbances. Their position was, generally speaking, an unenviable one. They were frequently compromised by the elected officers of the watch upon whom they had to rely for keeping the peace. At the moments of greatest tension – in the spring of 1562, for example, or again in the immediate aftermath of the St Bartholomew massacre – they were also unsure of the steer from above.[34] Toulouse was certainly not unique in finding that its local élite was divided and fighting amongst itself – divisions which made their mark upon the city's insurrection and resulting massacre in May 1562.[35] It is not surprising that city magistrates as well as sovereign court judges willingly collaborated with the clauses of royal edicts of pacification to erase all mention of sectarian troubles from their registers. Some, like the Parlement of Paris, chose to strike through the relevant judgments (leaving them legible without too much difficulty). Others, such as (for example) the consuls of Lyon, instructed their town secretary to tear the passage out relating to the treatment of the city's Protestants in 1572, but to cover themselves with a note as to what the offending passage had contained.[36] So, although the destruction of the legal record is far from complete, it is certainly so

patchy that, in only a few instances can the secondary accounts be confirmed (and even then only in the most general terms) by first-hand reports, carrying some degree of legal veracity.[37] For ordinary Catholics, their sense of 'chaos and confusion' (the terms used by Etienne Pasquier – usually a curious and well-informed contemporary) was perhaps a reflection of their knowledge that, in times of panic, rumour and misinformation were as significant as anything else; a shrewd awareness that they were witnessing moments when group fears and group activities were out of the control of any one individual or set of individuals. Their fear was transparent, and well founded. One anonymous account from Paris in 1567, told of his receiving orders to keep a good watch at night, to have arms at the ready, to stay indoors, keep a lantern alight until daylight, and keep buckets of water at the ready. 'That night', he continued, 'they found in the street the skin of a man who had been flayed alive, which terrified pious souls. If someone said a word in favour of the authors of the rebellion, it was permitted to kill him, which was the fate of many'.[38] These were not the circumstances to enquire too closely about the activity, beliefs and behaviour of one's neighbour.

It was only to be expected that, in the relative absence of coherent 'explanations' of what had happened from those who had either suffered, perpetrated, or been nominally responsible for keeping order during these massacres, the myth-making metahistory to which we have already referred should have taken over. The myth-makers were able to provide (inevitably partial, one-sided and speculative) explanations where none were otherwise available. Explanations – or exculpations – were certainly needed, especially by those in authority; and, equally so, for incomprehending foreigners, for whom the events in France were as bafflingly barbaric as the affairs of Bosnia to the majority of Western Europe this past two years. Reacting to the news of the St Bartholomew massacre, the Earl of Leicester wrote of 'that cruelltye that I think no Christian synce the heathen tyme hath hard of the lyke', whilst Lord Burghley declared, 'these French tragedies ... cannot be expressed with tongue to declare the cruelties'.[39] Propagandists and pamphleteers therefore created a history where there was none. But, in doing so, they inevitably drew on their imaginations and on a complex and inherited stock of absorbed stereotypes. To illustrate the point, let us cite the example of the famous 'affaire Saint-Jacques', when a secret conventicle of Protestants meeting in Paris was sprung, a riot ensued and many Protestants were arrested. It was described in the diary of a Provins priest, Claude Haton.[40] He recounted the granting of sexual favours ('fraternal and voluptuous charity') which went on at the conventicle before the candles were extinguished, along with incest,

infanticide, and cannibalism. His description owes almost nothing in detail to the events in Paris; but, as Luc Racaut has strikingly demonstrated, it owes a good deal to the accounts of the early Christian Church to be found in Tertullian along with an explicit borrowing from a passage from Guibert of Nogent's autobiography which refers to the heretics at Soissons at the beginning of the twelfth century.[41] Similarly, Georges Bosquet, the magistrate from Toulouse, whose account of the insurrection and subsequent massacres in that city in May 1562 constitutes one of its major sources, chronicles the diabolic and monstrous elements of heresy.[42] The latter was a dangerous and wicked monster, 'hideous and detestable ... nourished and suckled, engendered even, by the ambition and avarice of its miscreant perpetrators who, without any vestige of religion, secretly plotted the entire overthrow of the human race'. When he comes to describe the early Protestant meetings in Toulouse, his views are entirely dominated by this set of stereotypes, and this was with an explicitly didactic purpose. It was in a publication in 1561 by his fellow judge in Toulouse, Jean Gay, that Bosquet had found conveniently assembled all the materials from Toulouse's Albigensian past which confirmed the prejudices underlying his views.[43] Protestant accounts of massacres were similarly influenced by stereotypes from the past and also carried a didactic message. The account of the sufferings of the 'martyrs' of Lyon in 1572 drew implicitly on those of its early Christian martyrs – indeed in a later edition it was bound alongside a homily against idolatry and an account of the persecution under the Roman Empire.[44]

The published pamphlets and accounts of the massacres compete with one another, contradicting each other's claims and counterclaims. The process is highly complex and often impossible to unravel. How wary we should be, therefore, of taking the published accounts of French massacre at their face value! Georges Bosquet's history of the Toulouse events of 1562, for example, is a kind of hidden agenda for a Protestant riposte in the *Histoire Ecclésiastique* almost two decades later. The two accounts are mirror images of one another, the one a tit-for-tat response to the other. Should we take these published sources as evidence for distinctive underlying group consciousnesses towards religious violence? This is the essence of Denis Crouzet's magisterial work. An (unpublished) Protestant recital of the impact of St Bartholomew at Troyes suggests we should be wary of constructing too neat a typonomy, either of Catholic 'immanence', their destructive violence embodying God's will, or Protestant 'human' violence, their iconoclastic energies reflecting the need for mankind to reform the world in accordance with God's will.[45] The account begins with the Protes-

tant recalling that he had a distinct sense that these tragic events in the city had been predicted, portended by heavenly numerology, astrology and geology. The peace of Saint-Germain had been signed in September 1570. The ninth month of the year, according to some poets, was an auspicious month, it being the period of a conception leading to the birth of an infant. But, looking back on things ('my remembrance of the past'), this author had strong doubts. A child 'having been nourished and clothed for about two years became a great monster and cruel murderer of men'. He noted that Mars dominated over all the other planets throughout 1572, a bad omen for the Protestants. Then came the strange tremors and earth movements in the city of Troyes, which led to joists falling to the ground, a house collapsing onto the street, and a further structural collapse in a building which led to a woman being trapped and killed. To these ill-omens he attached the devaluation of foreign coin, high prices, a poor harvest, and 'several illnesses ... most of which [were] very strange and principally [affecting] the young'. This individual (it may have been Pierre Pithou) sought to explain the subsequent rounding-up of Protestants in the city and their murder in the city's prison in the wake of the news from Paris, not merely in terms of greedy and unscrupulous individuals driven by the devil, but as immanent within the world, predicted by strange and unnatural events. In the extraordinary fears and suspicions aroused by sectarian tension and fed by rumour, people could see what they wanted to see (hawthorn trees, for example, blooming suddenly in late summer after St Bartholomew in Paris, touching which apparently worked curative miracles) and even the sceptical could be disposed to believe what they wanted to believe.

Notes

1. *Histoire mémorable de la persécution et saccagement du peuple de Merindol et Cabrières et autres circonvoisins appelez Vaudois* (1556).
2. G. Baum, E. Cunitz and E. Reuss, eds, *Corpus Reformatorum (opera Calvini)* (59 vols, Braunschweig, 1863-80), vol. 49, col. 136.
3. Towards the end of the sixteenth century in France the term 'massacre' would be appropriated by the Catholic League to describe (in particular) the assassination of the Duke and Cardinal of Guise at Blois in December 1588; this is particularly evident in the numerous League pamphlet publications of that period; e.g., *Portraict et description du massacre proditoirement commis ... en la personne de Henry de Lorraine ...* (Paris, 1588?); *Discours en forme d'Oraison funèbre sur le massacre et parricide de Monseigneur Le Duc et cardinal de Guyse* (Paris, 1589?); *Remonstrance faicte au Roy par Madame de Nemours [Anne d'Este], sur le massacre de ses enfans* (Paris, 1588; 1589); *La nullité de la pretendue innocence et justification des massacres de Henry de Valois ...* (Paris?, 1589).

4. 'Massacre' occurs six times in the English translation of Du Bartas; animals 'massacre' one another, people are 'massacred' and the 'Machiavellian Brains' of politique princes acting without God's blessing also engineer 'publique, (lawfull) Massacre'.
5. See, for example, the phrase occurring in William Warner's verse epic, *Albions England* (1592 edition); Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* (written *c.*1592; published in the incomplete surviving edition, 1593/4), incorporates both the 'massacres' of 1572 and the 'massacres' of 1588 with the play culminating in the death of the Machiavellian duke of Guise and the lines: '*Vive la messe!* Perish Huguenots!/ Thus Caesar did go forth and thus he died'.
6. This pattern was noted in Denis Richet, 'Aspects socio-culturels des conflits religieux à Paris dans la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle', *Annales E.S.C.*, 32 (1977): 764-89, esp. 770-71.
7. Janine d'Estèbe, *Tocsin pour un massacre* (Toulouse, 1974), chap. 9, 143-55, citing Michelet, 143.
8. Penny Roberts, *A City in Conflict: Troyes during the French Wars of Religion* (Manchester, 1996); Mark Greengrass, 'The Anatomy of a Religious Riot in Toulouse in May 1562', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 34 (1983): 367-91.
9. Philip Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge, 1981), chaps. 3 and 4; Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (New York and Oxford, 1991).
10. J. M. Davies, 'Persecution and Protestantism: Toulouse, 1562-1575', *Historical Journal*, 22 (1979), 31-51.
11. N. Z. Davis, 'The rites of violence', *Past and Present*, 59 (1973); reprinted in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), chap. 6.
12. Ibid., 173.
13. Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu: la violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525–vers 1610)* (2 vols. Paris, 1990).
14. E.g. *Destruction du saccagement exerce cruellement par le Duc de Guise et sa cohorte, en la ville de Vassy*, in L. Cimber and F. Danjou, eds, *Archives curieuses*, 1st series (14 vols. Paris, 1834-40), vol. 4, 103-56.
15. Many of these titles are recorded in the splendid bibliography to Crouzet, *Guerriers de Dieu*, vol. 2, 633-93. This is a listing constructed, however, from the Bibliothèque Nationale and should not be regarded as entirely exhaustive. Provincial publications are not always represented there. So, for example, the interesting *Discours du massacre de ceux de la religion reformée fait à Lyon par les Catholiques Romains* ([Lyon], 1572), probably written by Jean Ricaud, is not recorded in it – a title which may serve as one example of the richness of the pamphlet record for these incidents.
16. Jean Crespin, *Histoire des Martyrs*, eds D. Benoit and M. Lelièvre (3 vols. Toulouse, 1899); Simon Goulart, *Mémoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles Neufiesme contenant les choses les plus notables, faictes et publiés tant par les catholiques que par ceux de la Religion* ... (3 vols. Meidelbourg [Geneva], 1576); cf his later collections for the later period of the Catholic League: *Mémoires de la Ligue, contenant les événemens les plus remarquables depuis 1576* ... (6 vols. Amsterdam, 1758).
17. On Simon Goulart, see L. C. Jones, *Simon Goulart, 1543-1628* (Geneva and Paris, 1917); and R. M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St Bartholomew's Day Massacres, 1572-1576* (Cambridge Mass. and London, 1988), esp. 2-6.
18. E.g., amongst numerous titles which might have been cited: Nicolas Regnault, *Discours veritable des guerres et troubles advenus au pays de Provence* ... (1564); *Histoire véritable de la mutinerie, tumulte et sedition faite par les prestres de sainct-Médard* ..., in Cimber and Danjou, eds, *Archives curieuses*, 1st series,

vol. 4, 49-62; *Advertissement particulier et veritable, de tout ce qui s'est passé en la ville de Tholose depuis le massacre et assassinat* ... (Toulouse, 1589); *Discours veritable de l'entreprise sur Troyes a demy prises par les heretiques* ... (1590).

19. Goulart, *Mémoires de l'Estat*, vol. 1, fols. I-IV; translated and cited in Kingdon, *Myths*, 4-5.
20. For the debate, see Jean-Louis Bourgeon, 'Les légendes ont la vie dure: à propos de la Saint-Barthélemy et de quelques livres récents', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 34 (1987), 102-16, and the same author's, *L'assassinat de Coligny* (Geneva, 1992); Marc Venard, 'Arrêtez le massacre', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 39 (1992), 645-61. Denis Crouzet, *La Nuit de la Saint-Barthélemy: un rêve perdu de la renaissance* (Paris, 1994). The latter is a remarkable reappraisal, including a review of the evidence as to whom (if anyone) was incriminated in the events leading up to the massacre. It has substantially influenced the argument of this chapter in the section which follows.
21. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London, 1990).
22. *Mémoires de Jean de Mergey, gentilhomme champenois in Collection complète des mémoires relatifs à l'Histoire de France* (ed. M. Petitot), vol. 34 (Paris, 1823), esp. 70-76.
23. David Buisseret and Bernard Barbiche, eds, *Oeconomies royales*, vol. 1 (1572-1594) (Paris, 1970), esp. 12-15.
24. Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Histoire de Monsieur de Thou des choses arrivées en son temps* (3 vols. Paris, 1659), vol. 3, 369.
25. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, 169.
26. Le Marquis de La Grange, ed., *Mémoires authentiques de Jacques Nompar de Caumont duc de la Force* ... (4 vols. Paris, 1843), vol. 1, 46-50.
27. *Mémoires de Madame de Mornay. Edition revue* ... (Paris, 1865), vol. 1, esp. 51-71.
28. Crouzet, *La nuit de la Saint-Barthélemy*, 33.
29. Ibid., 35; cited from *La Mort prodigieuse de Gaspart de Coligny, qui fut Admiral de France* ... (Paris, [1572]).
30. Jean Crespin, *Histoire des martyrs*, vol. 3, 678-80; Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, 220.
31. [Hugues Sureau du Rosier], Confession et recognoissance ... (Basel, 1574), 7-8, cited in Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, 142.
32. De Thou, *Mémoires* ... (*Nouvelle collection des mémoires*, J-F. Michaud and J-J-F. Poujoulat, eds) (Paris, 1838), vol. 11, 276.
33. To take a Protestant example, Nicolas Pithou from Troyes was absent from the city at the moments of greatest danger for the Protestant church there. His account of its turbulent history in those periods must have been constructed from the testimony of others: see M. Greengrass, 'Nicolas Pithou: experience, conscience and history in the French civil wars', in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts, eds, *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), 18.
34. For the confusions surrounding royal orders after St Bartholomew, see Philip Benedict, 'The Saint Bartholomew's Massacres in the Provinces', *Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), 211-34.
35. Greengrass, 'The anatomy of a religious riot', 367-91.
36. Charles Péricaud, *Notes et documents pour servir à l'histoire de Lyon* ... (Lyon, 1842), 71.
37. For one example of confirmation, see Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, 101, where she was able to find some elements of corroboration for Crespin's story of the death of the Paris passementier, Philippe Le Doux and his wife at St Bartholomew.

According to Crespin, his wife was so close to giving birth that the midwife was already in attendance. She pleaded with her assailants to be allowed to have the baby and even attempted to escape. She climbed to the attic but was caught, stabbed, and thrown into the street below. The half-born child, its head poking out of the mother's abdomen, was left to die in the gutter. In this case, we have part of the judgement (sentence) in a subsequent lawsuit involving the distribution of the property taken from their house. The legal documentation tells us the name of the assailant (which Crespin had either not known or neglected to mention). But the depositions only tell us 'that they were killed'. They present a clinical and minimalist account of what had happened in comparison with Crespin's stomach-turning recital.

38. B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, 80.
39. Edmund Lodge, ed., *Illustrations of British History* (4 vols. London, 1791), vol. 2, 74-76.
40. Claude Haton, *Mémoires contenant le récit des événements accomplis de 1553 à 1582* (2 vols. Paris, 1857), vol. 1, 50-53.
41. Luc Racaut, 'Incest, infanticide and cannibalism: the use of medieval typology to describe French protestants in sixteenth-century catholic polemic' (unpublished paper). I am grateful to the author for his permission to cite this paper here.
42. G. Bosquet, *Histoire sur les troubles advenus en la ville de Tolose, l'an 1562* (Toulouse, 1595). This account had originally been published in Latin in the immediate aftermath of the affairs it describes; but it was banned and copies of it confiscated by orders of the *conseil privé* on the grounds that it contravened the clause of the edict of pacification of 1563 obliterating the memory of sectarian incidents during the previous civil wars.
43. Jean Gay, *Histoire des scismes et heresies des Albigeois conforme à celle de present* ... (Paris, 1561).
44. The *Discours du massacre de ceux de la religion reformee fait à Lyon* [originally published in 1572], was republished in 1574 with, *Une ... remonstrance aux Lyonnais lesquels ... continuent à faire hommage aux idoles and an Epistre des anciens fideles de Lyon et de Vienne, contenant le récit de la persecution qui fut dressé contre eux sour l'Empereur Antoninus Verus.*
45. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS Dupuy 333, fols. 65v-75.