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Reality vs. Perceptions: The Treatment of Early Modern French Jews in Politics and Literary Culture

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts at
Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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I dedicate this work to my great-uncle Frank Panzino, whose stories of his experiences in World War II sparked an interest in history when I was young.

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A NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND SPELLING

All translations of French texts are my own, unless they appear within a quote from a secondary source. Quotes that have been translated out of the French appear in the body of the text in English, with the original French given in the footnotes. Text in the footnotes appears with the original spellings given by the French source, accounting for their odd appearance. Translations of Michel de Montaigne and Jean Racine's works by Donald M. Frame and a Mr. Brereton, respectively, were referenced during this process. Although they are not cited in the footnotes for the translations, their works do appear in the bibliography. An eighteenth century English translation of the marquis d'Argens' *Lettres juifves* was also referenced, however, the translator was not provided in the source; this work is also listed in the bibliography. Titles of works that were not written in English will always be referred to by their original title; for the reader's convenience, the English translation appears next to the first reference of the work in the body of the text.

As indicated in the footnotes, both the spellings of biblical figures and characters that appear in works of literature are given. When referring to a character within a story, the author's spelling is utilized in the analysis; when referring back to the biblical story, the original spelling is given. This is done so the reader can differentiate between biblical descriptions and literary analysis. In the case of d'Argens' *Lettres juifves*, the 'fv' will appear in the text, not the contemporary spelling of "juives."

All noble and royal titles (e.g. duke of, count, marshal, etc.) are given in the French (duc de, comte, maréchal, respectively); their names will also appear with the traditional French spelling. Henry IV, for example, will always appear as Henri IV.

ABSTRACT

REALITY VS. PERCEPTIONS: THE TREATMENT OF EARLY MODERN FRENCH JEWS IN POLITICS AND LITERARY CULTURE

By Michael Woods, Master of Arts.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2014.

Director: Dr. George Munro
Professor, Department of History

Although historians have written extensively on both the early modern era and the development of an absolute monarchy, the history of Jewish communities in France and the role they played has been largely ignored. Beginning with the French Wars of Religion, this study analyzes to what extent France's religious situation affected the growth of absolutism and how this in turn affected the Jews. Taking advantage of the fractured nature of the early French monarchy, Jews began settling in provinces along the border of both Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. Affected by economic jealousies and cultural perceptions of Jews, the treatment of these communities by local officials led to requests by Jews for royal intervention in these regions. Perceptions of Jews evolved through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the French Enlightenment influenced the way Jewish characters were presented. This study then ties these perceptions of Jews to the political and economic reality of these communities in an attempt to create a unified history of France's early modern Jewish population.

Introduction

Historians of French society have generally overlooked the study of Jewish communities during the early modern era. Although they had been expelled from France in 1394, Jews had slowly begun to re-enter the kingdom, establishing strong communities in the South near merchant cities, and in the North and East along the border with the various German principalities and states. This sporadic placement of Jews across France, Solomon Posener suggests, has lent itself to the absence of a common historiography. In “The Social Life of the Jewish Communities in France in the 18th Century,” Posener argues that under the Ancien Régime, the Jews of France did not form one organic whole and their settlements in various provinces meant that ties of national solidarity could not unite them.¹ This separateness was felt because each individual community was required to take actions that would only benefit their own people, but measures were not taken to correct it. The Jews of Bordeaux, for example, were rarely concerned with those in Alsace or Metz. It was not until the years leading out of the Revolution in 1789 that the term “Jewish nation” would even emerge in reference to all of the Jews in France. Writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often referred to the Jews by their various communities – the Jews of Avignon, the Jews of Nancy, the *portugais* or Portuguese Jews, etc. – that further lent itself to this feeling of separateness.

When Posener’s article was published in 1945, a communal history of the Jews in France under the Ancien Régime had yet to be written. While attempts by historians such as Philippe

¹ S. Posener [Solomon Vladimirovich Pozner], “The Social Life of the Jewish Communities in France in the 18th Century.” *Jewish Social Studies* vol. 7 no. 3 (1945): 196.

Bourdrel (whose *Histoire des juifs de France* was first published in 1974) have been made to rectify this, the collective history that Posener referred to has yet to be written. One reason for this may be the lack of necessity for historians to see the “Jewish question” as something more significant, whereas the “Huguenot question” has long dominated the historiography of French absolutism. Traditional treatments of Jews grapple with each community separately and ignore the larger picture of their political, social, and cultural situation.

In his book *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815*, Ronald Schechter approaches the issue of French Jews in a completely new way. By asking to what extent Gentiles were interested in the Jews, Schechter questions those historians who, “in their rush to praise or condemn the *philosophes* and political figures who wrote or spoke about the Jews,” have failed to ask how often French Gentiles actually wrote about them, and how popular these books with Jewish characters really were.² Yet Schechter’s work still remains quite limited in scope, and he is unapologetic in reminding readers that his history is not a Jewish *histoire totale*, but rather a selective history of the eighteenth century.³

Published in 1968, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg’s *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*⁴ may come closest to addressing the issues brought up by this study, however, his analyses fall short of trying to focus on these various communities as one whole. Hertzberg treats each of the Jewish communities separately, grouping his discussions geographically instead of thematically. While he does address the various works of the *philosophes*, Hertzberg does not explore to what

² Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3.

³ *Ibid*, 16.

⁴ Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

extent these works culturally impacted Frenchmen outside of the *salons*, and his work still leaves a space in the historiography to explore how the perceptions of Jews created by these works during the French Enlightenment may have been felt in the provinces.

By addressing to what extent the Gentiles were interested in the Jews, one cannot simply ignore the roles played by the Jews as an “other” within France. While the resettlement of France’s Jews occurred sporadically throughout the sixteenth century, the establishment of these communities well before the start of the French Wars of Religion places them in a difficult time in France’s history. While the Jews were largely left out of these civil wars, the fighting between French Catholics and Protestants repeatedly highlighted how a religious “other” could peacefully exist alongside the French Catholic (or Gallican) Church. At the same time, many Jewish communities – particularly in southwestern France – lived in the very heart of Huguenot territory, and faced the same day-to-day warfare that many French Protestants did.

This study will begin with the complexities of the Wars of Religion, and to what extent these wars affected the trajectory of the French government toward absolutism. Decades of civil war split France along religious lines as the political and economic power of the Huguenots threatened royal authority. The inability of royal forces to quickly quash Protestant rebellions showed the weaknesses of the state, and ultimately the need for centralizing power. The state that emerged from the French Wars of Religion under Henri IV, however, was stronger and more prepared for this centralization to occur. War and religion became two of the important keys to absolutism, and the suppression of the Huguenots across France showed the lengths the monarchy would go to ensure its power would be left unrivaled in the kingdom. The increased involvement of the monarchy in the provinces would continue to grow after the wars as the state crushed rebellion and quickly extended power to the provinces. It is arguable that the short

twelve-year reign of Henri IV that began after the religious wars was the most crucial to this development of the absolutist state. After reclaiming his kingdom, Henri was able to draw the power of the state inward and then effectively initiate reform. The first chapter of this study then serves as the background of this establishment of the absolute monarchy of which the Jewish situation will then be placed into.

As we shall then see in the second chapter, the ability of Jewish communities to function under the absolutist state wholly relied on the willingness of the Jews to acquiesce to royal authority. The community in Bordeaux was only established with a royal edict in 1550 and those Jews relied heavily upon the monarch's authority to intervene in local affairs; while Jews were first admitted into the regions of Alsace and Lorraine by military governors, they eventually called upon royal authority for protection against local abuses. It may have seemed out of place for the monarchy to accept the establishment of communities of any religious "other" within France, but the important economic benefits that the Jews brought to the border provinces lent to the crown's willingness to turn a blind eye to religious convictions. As long as the monarch benefitted, the Jews could rely upon the state's protection. Throughout this study, the idea of royal intervention and the strengthening of the absolutist state will repeatedly appear, indirectly revisiting the importance of the French Wars of Religion. How were the Jews able to effectively avoid the French Wars of Religion, then, if they still felt the impacts that these wars brought? While it may seem simple that the Jews merely experienced what could be considered the trickle-down of royal authority, the fact remains that the Jews played an active role in permitting royal authority in the provinces.

To see how these separate communities may have functioned as one whole, it is important to note cultural phenomena that may have influenced the way in which the Jews were

treated. By offering several close readings of French literature that contain prominent Jewish characters (chapter 3), this study will finally attempt to draw conclusions on how representations of Jews altered the perceptions of the nobility toward these communities, and to what extent this affected the treatment of French Jews. This latter part will then largely address the aspect of Schechter's work that focuses on the popularity of these works. The French writers featured in this final part of the study all feature or utilize Jews in ways that portray the writers' own views of the Jews and of Judaism.

The various portrayals of Jews that will be addressed cover both biblical Jews and those who lived during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Earlier French dramas used biblical stories to convey contemporary messages, using both Persian and Jewish characters to separate the audience from the roles themselves, which allowed for personal reflection. As literature evolved through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the ways in which Jews were utilized evolved along with it. French writers in the eighteenth century used Jews to highlight religious criticisms, or to relay comments about French society. By emphasizing stereotypes (and yet simultaneously turning these ideas on their heads) the writers of the French Enlightenment created provoking Jewish characters that challenged contemporary thought processes.

By playing cultural perceptions (as seen through literary analysis) off of the realities of France's Jewish populations (seen through the political workings of the various communities), this study will tie the separate communities together to attempt to create a basic communal history. The Jews of France will thus be treated as France's early history has been: regions that were separated by distance and even language were tied together, and one collective history was placed upon them. If this can be said of France's history, then why has it become so difficult to create one singular history of the Jews in France under the Ancien Régime?

Chapter 1

The State of Ancien Régime France

The existence of Jewish communities in Ancien Régime France, while few in number, is altogether astonishing when considering the religious conflicts that plagued French society through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Beginning late in the sixteenth century, the French Wars of Religion completely altered the social, cultural, and political workings of the kingdom. The wars pitted the Royal Army – comprised of French Catholics – against Calvinist factions in an attempt to resolve what has now been considered France’s “Huguenot problem.” While French Jewish populations were not directly affected by these civil wars, changes in societal structures and the shift from a weak, fractured monarchy to a strong, centralized state changed the way these communities functioned. Beginning with these religious wars, this chapter will lay the groundwork for an analysis of the Jewish situation in Early Modern France by tracing this shift in power leading toward the French Revolution, highlighting how the state grew both politically and geographically.

Political and Familial Background to Civil War

Although the French Wars of Religion seem the most logical place to begin a study of early modern French religion and society, the depth and intricacies of the wars themselves serve as a difficult launching point for any study. Political and familial tensions came to a head in the years leading up to the outbreak of civil war, as French laypeople demanded reform in a corrupt Church while a fractured monarchy attempted to rule a diverse kingdom. By 1559, France had

become a challenge to administer, although several territories belonging to modern-day France still lay outside its borders (see Figure 1): to the north, Artois and Flanders belonged to the Spanish king; in the east, Alsace and Lorraine were still held by the Holy Roman Empire; the Franche-Comté remained an imperial territory, but under the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis, Charolais reverted to France; in the south, Roussillon was Spanish, Béarn an independent principality, and Navarre remained an independent kingdom. In 1558, after centuries of English control, François, duc de Guise, reconquered the port of Calais. The kingdom was not contiguous, nor did its government rule all the land within the French border: the city of Metz was occupied by France, but a portion of the lands between its borders and Verdun were still a part of the Holy Roman Empire; the Comtat-Venassin (including the city of Avignon) belonged to the Holy See, while the House of Nassau controlled the principality of Orange.⁵

The process of stitching together the provinces and territories of France under the crown began at the end of the fifteenth century with the break-up of the great feudal states. Many historians often assume that the crown actively sought to eliminate these families, but James B. Collins argues that this is only partly the case: while the French kings would have wanted to eliminate the ducs of Burgundy or the independent state of Brittany, they had no interest in the complete disappearance of the great nobility.⁶ Without the dominating presence of these aristocrats in a given region, the state had no way to act and enforce the king's law. The demise of these states' political independence, however, allowed the king to create royal governors in the major provinces. These governorships were originally given to the members of the extended

⁵ Robert Knecht, *The French Civil Wars, 1562-1598* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 3.

⁶ James B. Collins, *From Tribes to Nation: The Making of France, 500-1799* (Toronto: Nelson Thomson Learning, 2002), 239-240; for the general history of this period I have utilized Collins for his clarity of argument and treatment of events.

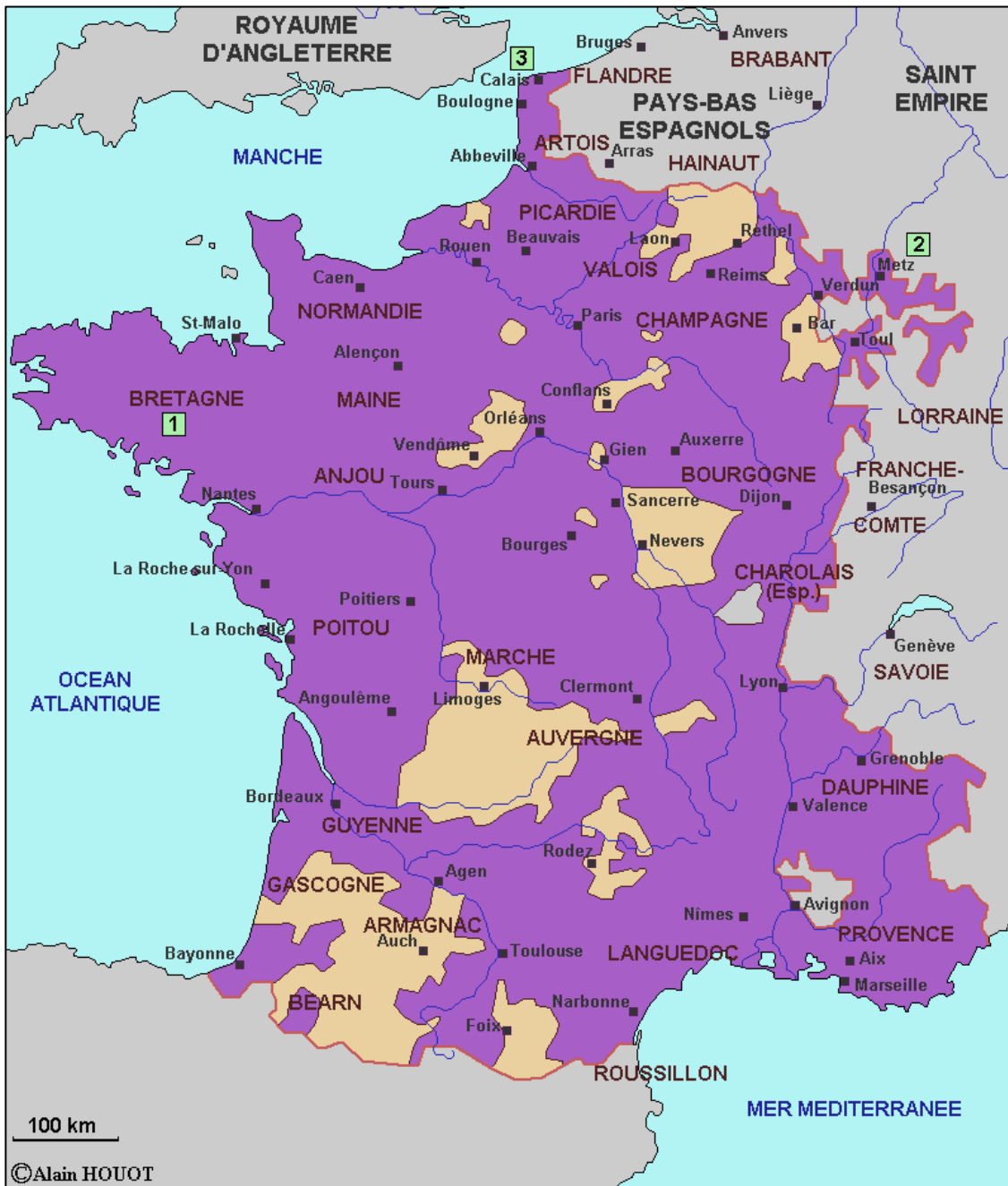


Figure 1: France in 1559⁷

Regions in gold were not under authority of the French crown by the start of the Wars of Religion in 1562. The green numbers indicate the following: 1 – the incorporation of Bretagne into France with the marriage of Anne de Bretagne to Charles VIII in 1532; 2 – annexation of the Three Bishoprics, or the early province consisting of Metz, Toul and Verdun; 3 – the purchase of Boulogne in 1550, and the conquest of Calais in 1558.

⁷ Alain HOUOT, *Le royaume de France de Charles VIII à Henri II, 1483-1559*, http://www.monatlas.fr/Hist/Z_Diacronie/France/fr_26.htm.

royal family, but by the time Henri II took the throne in 1547, only one of the eleven governors represented a male line of the royal family.⁸ Not only did this prove troublesome to the continuance of the royal bloodline, it also directly reflected the king's authority in the provinces. The king's power only extended to those provinces that he held titles for, and his power elsewhere relied heavily on the willingness of local governors to enact his decrees. This would have been much easier, had they all still remained within the family.

The disappearance of these offices from the royal line directly reflected the complexities of the French nobility and the marriages that were arranged to protect the succession of a familial line. Feuds among the three great French aristocratic families of the late-sixteenth century – the Bourbon, Guise, and Montmorency – have long been the focus of historians searching for the driving forces behind the Wars of Religion. Collins, however, highlights how this “misrepresents both the Wars and early modern French society.”⁹ By defining these clans simply along patrimonial lines, historians have long ignored the reality of these families intermarrying at least every second or third generation. While the existence of Salic law forbade a woman from inheriting the French crown, women were not barred from inheriting estates and the titles that came with them. Aristocratic women passed governorships on to their husbands that had belonged to the men in their family (i.e. their fathers and brothers). Their children would then inherit both the large landed estates and any offices or titles attached to them. Families were constantly divided by the survival of multiple sons, while several families would also be brought together through the marriage of daughters with the absence of a male heir.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

The royal family itself was not left untouched by this phenomenon. By 1527, only three lines survived amongst the ancient Capetian bloodlines: that which belonged to the King of France himself (the house of Valois), the house of Bourbon-Vendôme, and the house of Bourbon-Montpensier.¹⁰ Fearful of an end to the royal line, King François I attempted to expand out the number of families that could claim noble titles. He made Claude de Lorraine, the husband of Antoinette de Bourbon-Vendôme, the duc de Guise in 1527. Antoinette's niece, Marguerite de Bourbon, brought a ducal title to her husband, François de Clèves, who became the duc de Nevers in 1539. Continuing the process, Henri II elevated a baronial family, the Montmorencys, to a duchy in 1551; the new duc had a Bourbon – and thus also a Valois – connection as well: his wife, Madeleine of Savoy, was both the granddaughter of a Bourbon and the niece of Louise of Savoy, mother to François I.¹¹ Elevating both the Guise and Montmorency families brought extensive lands into the hands of the crown. The Guise claims lay mainly in Champagne, Normandy, Picardy, Maine, and Burgundy, while still holding claims to Lorraine, a region that the kings of France would continuously strive to absorb. The Montmorency family, who also held claim as governor of Languedoc, situated themselves on lands in Île-de-France, Picardy, Normandy, Champagne, Angoumois, and Brittany.¹²

Since they held such large portions of French land, it was crucial for the crown to shower the Guise and Montmorency families with gifts and high offices. Claude de Guise became the governor of Champagne in 1524, followed by his son François' ascension to the governorship of Dauphiné. Four more Guise estates – Aumale, Mayenne, Joinville, and Elbeuf – were raised to

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, 275.

¹² Knecht, *The French Civil Wars*, 35.

the status of duchy, placing five duchies within one single family. Each of these belonged to the sons and grandsons of Antoinette de Bourbon, tying them closer to the royal family by the female line. The Guise family also held the governorship of Burgundy, and the offices of Grand Master of the King's Household, royal chamberlain, master of the hunt, and commander of the king's galley. Marie de Guise married King James V of Scotland, and their daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots, married the dauphin, François II, in 1558.

Meanwhile, the Montmorency family had nearly as much success. In 1526, Anne de Montmorency became governor of Languedoc, then Grand Master of the King's Household and Constable of France in 1536. His eldest son, Henri de Montmorency-Damville, succeeded him as governor of Languedoc while a second son, François, became governor of the Île-de-France in 1538. Anne's nephews, Gaspard II de Coligny and Henri d'Andelot, became Admiral of France and colonel-general of the infantry, respectively, allowing the family almost complete control over military promotions throughout the 1550s.¹³

The influence of the Bourbon and Guise families stretched beyond land and politics as they also began dominating the Church hierarchy. Royal favor allowed Claude de Guise's brother Jean, as well as his sons, Charles and Louis, to become cardinals. As cardinal of Lorraine and archbishop of Reims, Charles earned a lofty income of almost 300,000 *livres* a year;¹⁴ as cardinal of Guise and archbishop of Sens, Louis held religious jurisdiction over Paris. Charles de Bourbon, meanwhile, became the cardinal of Bourbon, the archbishop of Rouen, and the abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris.

¹³ Collins, *Tribes to Nation*, 241.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Although the practice of royal protection and intervention in the French Catholic Church had begun with the coronation of Charlemagne, royal control of the ecclesiastical hierarchy was all but guaranteed by the sixteenth century. The Concordat of Bologna of 1516 – which gave Pope Leo X’s support to François I for his military campaigns in Italy against the Habsburgs – completely voided the Pragmatic Sanction of 1438, whereby the king and pope agreed to let cathedral chapters elect bishops independent of royal or papal control.¹⁵ With the Concordat in place, the king assumed the right to directly nominate candidates for bishoprics and archbishoprics, giving him the ability to fill the highest ecclesiastical offices in the kingdom with his relatives and supporters. In exchange, Leo would be able to veto any of these nominations if they were unqualified, as well as collect revenues from all newly appointed holders. While the papacy may have benefitted economically from this agreement, the true winner was the crown: it consecrated the king as protector of both church and state, but also guaranteed the growth of corruption and the decline of spirituality throughout the Gallican church.¹⁶

The Rise of French Protestantism

The Concordat of Bologna was issued just as the Protestant Reformation began changing Europe’s religious make-up. Beginning with the writings of Martin Luther in 1517, those in favor of a more reformed view and understanding of the Bible and Christianity itself began to take hold in Germany, and it took only a few years for Luther’s works to make it into France. The first appearance of Luther’s books in the kingdom dates to 1519, and they were sold openly for almost two years before the Faculty of Theology in Paris ordered a crackdown on their

¹⁵ Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 13.

distribution.¹⁷ After 1521, the number of heresy cases heard in courts rose noticeably, but there was still little that was especially “Lutheran” about the beliefs being tried; most revealed dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church. These sentiments were merely validated by Luther’s writings, not created by them. The social backgrounds of the majority of these early “heretics” remained consistent with previous centuries – they were largely artisans and day laborers. The most notorious case of heresy in the 1520s, however, involved Louis de Berquin, a Picard nobleman. He was the first victim of the royal edict of 1523 that prohibited possession of Luther’s work. King François I intervened in the trial before Berquin was convicted, but he was arrested again in 1529 and was quickly found guilty as a relapsed heretic. Berquin was sentenced to life in prison, but his appeal to the king angered the judges who then sentenced him to death; he was strangled and burned at the stake two days later.¹⁸

The 1530s brought a shift in what was being read by French Protestants, and this became altogether apparent with the Day of the Placards. In the morning of 18 October 1534, placards (broadsheets nailed on to boards) were posted in public places across Paris and several other cities, as well as the château of Amboise, where the king had been located. While the tale alleges to a placard being nailed to the king’s chamber door at Amboise, the fact remains that the most important part of a placard at Amboise was the message being sent directly to the king.¹⁹ Antoine Marcourt, a Frenchman who fled to Switzerland several years earlier, wrote the text, which was then smuggled into the kingdom by a group of radical dissidents.

¹⁷ Frederic J. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 136.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

The Day of the Placards became the first manifestation of French Protestantism that had looked beyond the teachings of Luther. By 1535, Protestantism had begun reaching further across France as traveling journeymen and artisans were exposed to new ideas and opinions. The beliefs of these Protestants were often disorganized, and they were limited to a loose network of individuals and compact clandestine cells; however, there was one small but important group of wealthy merchants and artisans who were becoming attracted to the reformed religion. Unlike the lower classes, they were more likely to have read the major Reformers and were also more eager to replace the existing Church with a new organization – but they still lacked the leadership, coherence, and structure to make this possible. All of this was provided in Jean Calvin, the son of a cathedral notary from Noyon, Picardy. After religious tensions came to a head in France, Calvin fled to Basel, Switzerland, where he published the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536. The turning point for the French Reformation came five years later, when, in 1541, the first French translation of *Institutes* appeared, quickly replacing earlier French Protestantism with uniformity and agreement. Although the conversion over to Calvinism was slow, the increasing number of missionaries sent from Geneva to establish churches meant that by 1559, there were very few French Protestants who were not Calvinists.²⁰

Occurring almost simultaneously, this shift in France’s religious climate, political power, and noble favor propelled the kingdom toward civil war. Under Henri II, the Guise and Montmorency families’ struggle to gain favor with the king was kept in balance, but the accession of François II in 1559 greatly shifted the favor toward the Guises. At the age of only fourteen, his wife’s uncles – Charles, cardinal of Lorraine, and François, duc de Guise – easily controlled the young king. This readjustment came, as Collins highlights, “at a singularly

²⁰ See Scott Hendrix, “Rerooting the Faith: The Reformation as Re-Christianization,” in *Church History* vol. 69 no. 3 (2000): 558-577.

inopportune moment in the struggles of the gigantic aristocratic clan.”²¹ Gaspard II Coligny and François d’Andelot converted to Calvinism under the influence of their mother, Louise de Montmorency. Antoine de Bourbon, king of Navarre and first prince of the blood, invited Calvinist preachers to his quarters, while his brother Louis, prince de Condé, converted.²² Antoine’s wife, Jeanne d’Albret, also favored the Reformed, and publicly declared herself as Protestant on Christmas Day 1560. Meanwhile, the Guises remained ardent Catholics and rigorous prosecutors of Protestants.

The unpopularity of both the Guises and Catherine de Médicis, François II’s mother, pushed Condé and other Protestant nobles to react. Plotting their coup against the Guises in February 1560, the conspirators waited outside the château of Amboise where court was in residence. The tables were turned when the conspirators were ambushed by royal troops and hundreds of them were massacred. Known as the Tumult of Amboise, the coup was an utter failure; Condé was captured and arrested, but when brought before the king’s council for trial he denied involvement in the event. Condé fled the court, and while the monarchy debated what should be done about France’s Protestant population, fighting broke out between Catholics and Huguenots (as they were beginning to be called) across the kingdom. François II blamed Condé and Antoine de Navarre for the uprisings and had them arrested in Orléans to have them tried for *lèse-majesté*.²³ While the tribunal sensed a dramatic change occurring, it finally voted for the

²¹ Collins, *Tribes to Nation*, 242.

²² Although Louis would become the head of the Huguenot faction, Antoine de Bourbon later reconverted to Catholicism, and spent most of the Wars of Religion fighting his brother.

²³ *Lèse-majesté*: “injured majesty”; an offense violating the dignity of a reigning sovereign or against the state.

death penalty for Condé in November 1560. In the end, however, Condé was spared when the king fell ill and died on 5 December 1560, leaving his fourteen-year-old brother Charles as king.

The death of François II could not have been more ill timed. The Estates General – which had not met since 1484 – was set to open 13 December 1560. Called by the king but faced with a regency government, the Estates were placed in a precarious political situation: the delegates were not given mandates to ratify the queen mother’s claim to be regent, and the meeting had to be adjourned. The Estates were scheduled to reconvene for August 1561 at Pontoise, where Antoine de Navarre, as the eldest prince of the blood, had the strongest possibility of becoming regent. He and Catherine, however, reached a private agreement in which she would head the regency; he was given the empty title of lieutenant general, and Condé regained his family’s traditional governorship of Picardy.

The French Wars of Religion: 1562 – 1629²⁴

Although fighting had broken out between Huguenots and Catholics in the years leading up to it, the traditional spark of the Wars of Religion is seen as the massacre of Vassy on 1 March 1562 (see Figure 2 for dates, major combatants, important battles, and the outcomes of the Wars of Religion). Leaving 30 dead and more than 100 wounded, the event at Vassy inspired the Huguenots – who had already begun preparations for war – to finish their armament and act upon Catholic aggressions. Situated at Fontainebleau, Protestant nobles left court to congregate in Île-

²⁴ Traditional time frames of the Wars of Religion place the ending year in 1598 with the Edict of Nantes. I, however, will be following the timeline establish by Mack P. Holt, who dates the conclusion of the Wars in 1629 with the ending of the siege of La Rochelle.

de-France at Meaux, while Condé marched southward to Orléans and captured the city.²⁵ He called for the Protestant armies of France to join him, and the stage was set for war.

Before the continuous cycle of war and peace could begin, the monarchy was in desperate need of an army. Lacking a standing army, the regency state – now firmly controlled by Catherine de Médicis – recruited *Reitere* and *Landsknechte* from Germany, and Swiss infantry to build up existing companies in France.²⁶ While continuing with preparations, Catherine still hoped to defuse the situation and avoid costly warfare. Talks with Huguenot leaders left Catherine with little room for negotiation; and her hopes lay with Condé. After face-to-face talks with the queen regent, Condé – who also hoped to avoid all-out conflict – appeared ready to oblige and go into exile, but his followers refused to quit and lose their homeland. Royal troops had yet to be deployed, but Huguenot troops had already begun to occupy towns throughout the Loire valley: Tours, Blois, Angers, and Beaugency fell before May 1562.²⁷

As the violence between Catholics and the Huguenots spread, Catherine looked outward, appealing to the pope, the duc de Savoy, and Philip II of Spain for assistance.²⁸ Huguenot forces were reluctant to ask for foreign intervention until it was almost certain that the crown would be receiving help from Spain, and when financial and military support from Elizabeth I of England was sought out, the queen was more concerned with regaining Calais than with aiding fellow

²⁵ Knecht, *The French Civil Wars*, 83.

²⁶ James B. Wood, *The King's Army: Warfare, Soldiers, and Society During the Wars of Religion in France, 1562-1576* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 40-41; *Reitere* were sixteenth century cavalry armed with several pistols that began replacing the heavier lancer cavalry. German *Landsknechte* became an important military source during the fifteenth and sixteenth century, consisting of mercenary pikemen and supporting foot soldiers.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 12.

²⁸ Knecht, *The French Civil Wars*, 93.

First War (Apr. 1562 – Mar. 1563)			
Catholic Forces	Huguenot Forces	Major Conflicts	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne de Montmorency • François de Lorraine II, duc de Guise • Antoine de Bourbon • Armand de Gontaut, baron de Biron 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louis de Bourbon, prince de Condé • Gaspard II de Coligny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massacre of Vassy (1 Mar. 1562) • Siege of Rouen (May – Oct. 1562) • Battle of Dreux (Dec. 1562) • Siege of Orléans (Feb. 1563) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edict of Amboise (9 Mar. 1563) • Death of Antoine de Bourbon (1562) • Death of François de Lorraine II (1563)
Second War (Sept. 1567 – Mar. 1568)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne de Montmorency • Henri I, duc de Guise • Léonor, duc de Longueville • Armand de Gontaut, baron de Biron 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louis de Bourbon, prince de Condé • Gaspard II de Coligny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surprise of Meaux (28 Sept. 1567) • Battle of Saint-Denis (10 Nov. 1567) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace of Longjumeau (23 Mar. 1568): confirmed the Edict of Amboise • Death of Montmorency (1567)
Third War (Sept. 1568 – Aug. 1570)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henri, duc d'Anjou • Henri I, duc de Guise • François de Bourbon, duc de Montpensier • Armand de Gontaut, baron de Biron 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louis de Bourbon, prince de Condé • Henri I de Bourbon, prince de Condé • Gaspard II de Coligny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battle of Jarnac (13 Mar. 1569) • Battle of Moncontour (3 Oct. 1569) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace of Saint-Germain (8 Aug. 1570): granted the security of four strongholds • Death of Louis de Bourbon (1569)
Fourth War (Aug. 1572 – July 1573)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henri II, duc d'Anjou • Henri de Navarre • Henri I de Bourbon, prince de Condé • Henri I, duc de Guise 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (24 Aug. 1572) • Siege of La Rochelle (1572 – 1573) • Siege of Sancerre (1572 – 1573) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death of Coligny (1572) during Massacre • Edict of Boulogne (July 1573): Protestant worship only in private homes
Fifth War (Nov. 1574 – May 1576)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henri III 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henri de Navarre • Henri de Bourbon, prince de Condé • François, duc d'Alençon • Henri I de Montmorency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasion of Champagne by John Casimier of the Palatinate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edict of Beaulieu (6 May 1576): freedom of worship throughout France • Protestant <i>temples</i> may be built with fewer restrictions • Meeting of the Estates-General to be called
Sixth War (Dec. 1576 – Sept. 1577)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Catholic League • Henri I, duc de Guise • François, duc d'Anjou • Henri I de Montmorency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henri de Navarre • Henri de Bourbon, prince de Condé 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siege of La Charité (25 Apr. 1576 – 2 May 1577) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treaty of Bergerac (Sept. 1577) • Edict of Poitiers (Sept 1577)
Seventh War (Jan. 1579 – Nov. 1580)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • François, duc d'Anjou 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henri de Bourbon, prince de Condé 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seizure of La Fère by Condé 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treaty of Fleix (26 Nov. 1580)
Eighth War (1585 – Apr. 1598) – also known as the War of the Three Henries			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battles of Coutras and Vimory (Oct. 1587) • Battle of Arques (Sept. 1589) • Battle of Ivry and Siege of Paris (March 1590) • Siege of Amiens (1597) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assassination of duc de Guise (Dec. 1588) • Assassination of Henri III (Aug. 1589) • 1594: Coronation of Henri IV • Edict of Nantes (1598)

Figure 2: The French Wars of Religion²⁹

²⁹ All information in the chart has been compiled from Collins (*From Tribes to Nation*), Knecht (*The French Civil Wars*), and Wood (*The King's Army*).

Protestants. Elizabeth insisted upon English occupation of Le Havre as a security for the return of Calais. Unable to receive the necessary aid from Geneva, Huguenot forces had no other option than to accept Elizabeth's demand to station troops in Le Havre, and signed the Treaty of Hampton Court in September 1562.

The king's army, led by the recently reconverted Lieutenant General Antoine de Bourbon, left Paris in July, marching south. Royal forces recaptured Blois before moving on to Bourges, taking the city in August. Lines of communications were cut between the Huguenots in Orléans and those in the Midi, inspiring Catholic forces to march upon Rouen. Siege was laid to the city from May until October, and Huguenot leaders fled while other Protestants slipped away to nearby strongholds. The royal army seized Rouen, but not without their own great loss: Navarre was fatally wounded on 15 October, dying a few days later. Charles de Bourbon served as his replacement, leading the Catholic forces to a crushing victory at Dreux in December, forcing the Huguenots to retreat to Orléans. Catherine finally found the political room necessary to negotiate peace, and the Edict of Amboise, signed on 19 March 1563.³⁰ Amboise restored peace by guaranteeing the Huguenots religious privileges and freedoms, including open and unregulated services in the private homes of nobles and in one suburb of a town in each *sénéchausée*. Only four years of peace had passed before two smaller wars broke again – the first lasting from September 1567 to March 1568, and the second from August 1568 to August 1570.

The complexities of the First War of Religion carried on throughout the series of civil wars. Peace settlements between factions lasted for only short periods, and both Catholic and Protestant forces were prepared for continued conflict. By the conclusion of the Second and

³⁰ Collins, *Tribes to Nation*, 245.

Third Religious Wars, the political scene of France had changed. The dominant players of the 1550s had all died: Antoine de Bourbon (1562) and Anne de Montmorency (1567) died in battle, while both François de Guise (1563) and Condé (1567) were assassinated. Now of age, King Charles IX had hardened his attitude toward Protestants after the failed attempt of Condé to capture the young king at Amboise in 1560. Charles took this attitude with him to the Peace of Saint-Germain, which ended the Third Religious War in 1570. Saint-Germain further limited the number of towns in which Protestants could worship, but guaranteed them four armed strongholds: La Rochelle, La Charité, Cognac, and Montauban. The growth of Huguenot populations had been greatest in these centers – particularly in La Rochelle and Montauban – because their distance from the kingdom’s capital during a period of weak monarchical power afforded them the ability to dodge most royal intervention. This, coupled with La Rochelle’s status as an important mercantile center, also afforded it the traffic necessary early in the Reformation for Protestant ideas to collect there.³¹

As passions between Catholics and Protestants were at an all time high following the Peace of Saint-Germain, Catherine de Médicis and Jeanne d’Albret planned to bring the leading religious families together through marriage. The first was to be arranged between Henri, prince de Condé, and his first cousin Marie de Clèves, whose sister was married to Henri, duc de Guise. The second was between Jeanne’s son and Catherine’s daughter, Henri de Navarre and Marguerite de Valois. With every leading noble arriving in Paris for the royal wedding, Catholic leaders seized their moment to strike against leading Huguenots. Four days after the wedding of

³¹ For a more detailed discussion of La Rochelle’s early Protestant history, see Kevin C. Robbins, *City on the Ocean Sea: La Rochelle, 1530-1650: Urban Society, Religion, and Politics on the French Atlantic Frontier* (Köln: Brill, 1997). Also see Philip Conner, *Huguenot Heartland: Montauban and Southern French Calvinism During the Wars of Religion* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), for a look at the growth of Montauban and its role during the Albigensian Crusade.

Henri de Navarre and Marguerite de Valois, an assassin wounded Gaspard de Coligny (the leading Huguenot admiral) as he walked home from a meeting with Charles IX. The following day, the king sent Guise to murder Coligny, sparking the Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, as groups of armed Catholic nobles sought out and murdered leading Protestants in Paris.³² The Parisian massacre inspired those in the provinces who had longed to do the same, sparking murders in the cities of Bordeaux, Toulouse, Angers, Saumur, Orléans, Rouen, and Lyon.

The death of Charles IX in May 1574 created a crisis of succession, as his brother Henri had recently been elected the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. With the fear that Henri de Navarre – who had the next greatest stake to the throne after the death of his father, Antoine de Bourbon – would claim the throne,³³ the king's brother sneaked out of Poland to take his rightful place. Reaching Blois in September 1574, he was crowned king of France at Reims in February 1575.³⁴ He initially maintained an alliance with the Guises, but disagreements between Henri III and Henri de Guise over his opposition to the queen mother led to a rapid decline in the family's standing in court. Arguments between Henri III and his brother François, duc d'Alençon led François to flee the court in September 1575. Their mother's fears came true when François joined the Protestant cause, helping the Huguenots defeat Henri III's forces in February 1576.

³² Collins, *Tribes to Nation*, 248.

³³ Henri de Navarre's conversion to Catholicism for the wedding may have allowed for his ascension to the throne, but his escape from the French court for Tours led to his formal abjuration of the Faith in February 1576. He rejoined the Huguenot forces by the conclusion of the Fourth Religious War, and fought against the Catholics until his final conversion to assume the role as King of France.

³⁴ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 217.

When the Estates General met again in Blois on 6 December 1576, the delegates – many of who were fervent supporters of the Guise family – hoped to convince the king to repudiate the Peace of Beaulieu, which had ended the Fifth Religious War. The treaty, also known as the Peace of Monsieur,³⁵ gave Huguenots the right of public worship and officially named Protestantism as the *religion prétendue réformée* throughout France. Although they were unsuccessful in defeating the Peace, the Estates made it clear that the existence of a second dominant religion would not be accepted in France, causing Henri de Navarre to take arms again – this time without the support of François, who had now received the title of duc d’Anjou.

The wars lasting from 1576 to 1580 and the subsequent peace until 1584 was filled with religious reform and noble reaction: a revival of the Catholic League in 1583 – which had formed in 1576 by Henri de Guise to curtail any seizure of power by the Huguenots – became more daunting to Henri III than ever before, as the Guises held the governorships of Brittany, Burgundy, Normandy, and Champagne. Meanwhile, Henri of Navarre controlled most of southern France, and Henri III’s power was truly only effective in the provinces that he personally held titles to. This proved more sinister to the king as his brother and only heir, François, duc d’Anjou, died on 10 June 1584;³⁶ the death of François made Henri de Navarre, a Huguenot, the presumptive heir to a Catholic throne.

With an heir poised to take the throne, constitutional crisis still loomed in 1585 as Pope Sixtus V declared Henri de Navarre disqualified from inheritance to the throne of France, given his Protestant faith. The Eighth Religious War, or simply the “War of the Three Henries,” fought

³⁵ The Peace of Monsieur being in reference to François, duc d’Alençon, who, as the king’s eldest brother, was given the honorary title of *Monsieur* in court. As part of the peace, François was given the title of duc d’Anjou, reverting him back under the influence of the Catholics and his brother.

³⁶ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 254.

between 1585 and 1589, pitted Henri de Navarre against Henri de Guise for the claim of succession to Henri III. The War of the Three Henries showed the true weakness of the state, but ultimately became the launching point for the most important outcome of the wars. The strength of the Catholic League proved too much for royal troops that had been busy fighting against Protestant forces led by Henri de Navarre, and Henri III was unable to stop Henri de Guise from entering Paris. The king was forced to flee on 12 May 1588 and capitulate to Guise's demands. Fearful of losing his crown, Henri III had Guise murdered on 23 December 1588. The king faced immense backlash: he was excommunicated by the Pope, and, by 1589, the Catholic League seized control of many of the kingdom's major cities, including Agen, Amiens, Bourges, Dijon, Le Mans, Nantes, Poitiers, Rouen, and Toulouse. In many parts of France, Henri III had become king in name only, including in Paris, where the assassination of the Guise brothers produced massive resistance to royal power.³⁷ Aligning with Henri de Navarre, the king laid siege to his capital in the hopes of reclaiming his throne.

While this series of civil wars has been deemed the French Wars of Religion, it is important to note that although battles were fought between Catholic and Protestant forces, they were also fought along familial lines. The Guise family was pitted against the Montmorencys and Bourbons, with all three having blood ties to the French throne. This struggle between different lines of royal blood came to a head at the War of the Three Henries – which has traditionally served as the last of the French Wars of Religions – as the House of Valois fought back advances from both the Guise and Bourbon lines. Were the French Wars of Religion truly fought over religious conviction, or was faith merely a cover by one family to kill off the next?

³⁷ Knecht, *The French Civil Wars*, 234.

The Rule of Henri IV

On 1 August 1589, the monk Jacques Clément stabbed Henri III at the army headquarters in Saint-Cloud, leaving Henri de Navarre as Henri IV, King of Navarre and King of France. Political chaos erupted, as many French people refused to accept Henri IV's claim to the throne. As Collins states, "the Salic Law may have pointed to Navarre but, for most Catholics, God's law did not."³⁸ Henri IV's struggle would lay in reconquering his kingdom from the League. While battles would continue, the king truly won his crown through religion: on 25 July 1593, he abjured Protestantism at Saint-Denis in Paris. Six months later, the archbishop of Chartres, crowned Henri, the first Bourbon king, in the Notre-Dame de Chartres – a move that made Henri IV the only French king since 1108 not to receive his crown at Reims. His rule was fully legitimized in September 1595, when the Pope absolved Henri of his sins and accepted the legitimacy of his conversion. With the power of the League quelled, Henri IV and his advisor, Maximilien de Béthune, duc de Sully, issued the Edict of Nantes in 1598. The Edict formally ended the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, allowing religious toleration for all Protestants in France.

The reign of Henri IV brought religious and political peace to France, despite its uneasy beginnings: Henri brought order and prosperity to a kingdom that had been afflicted by warfare for decades, while consolidating his power over an enormous state. Although he shared power, Henri took the critical step of placing control into the hands of his officers and not the nobility. The state bureaucracy of Henri IV, while built on the medieval foundations already in place, bore little resemblance to the structure of his predecessors. The state began to expand outward, a process that had origins in François I, who had heavily modified the judiciary and financial

³⁸ Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 281.

system of France. Henri IV and his ministers – led by chancellor Pomponne de Bellièvre and superintendent of finances Sully – were thus able to move forward with a more productive and involved state. Sully reformed the state’s finances and leased tax farms to French *financiers*, not Italians, shifting the financial center of France northward from Lyon to Paris in a move that completely altered the evolution of France. Due to the nature of France’s agricultural economy, many peasants had previously been unable to pay their taxes because of crippling debts that had been brought upon by droughts and the burden of war. In order for Sully to tap into this tax base again, all unpaid taxes dating from before 1598 were forgiven. Sully and Henri instituted the *paulette*, allowing offices to be purchased and made hereditary. The state’s finances were streamlined as pensions were cut, foreign debts paid off, and alienated royal demesnes (medieval manorial lands held by the king himself) repurchased. For the first time in France’s history, the government was running a surplus.³⁹

The assassination of Henri IV on 14 May 1610 placed his nine-year-old son, Louis XIII, on the throne. Because he was still in his minority, a regency government was put in place headed by his mother, Marie de Médicis, and the work laid out by Sully and Henri was reversed. After Sully retired in 1611, Marie paid off her opponents and raised pensions using the surplus Sully had managed to accumulate, but her position in power began to falter as the money began to run out by 1614. Political support continued to wane as she announced an extremely unpopular dual marriage for her children: Louis would marry Anne of Austria, the eldest daughter of the King of Spain, while Marie’s daughter, Elizabeth, would marry the Spanish *infante*, Philip, heir to the Spanish throne. César, duc de Vêndome (Louis’ illegitimate half-

³⁹ Ibid, 295.

brother), violently opposed the two marriages, and, with the support of other aristocrats, demanded the queen call a meeting of the Estates General.

The unpopularity of Marie's favorites, Concino Concini and his wife, Leonora Galigai, became her eventual downfall. Marie dismissed her late husband's counselors, Villeroy and Jeannin, and called new men into the royal council, including Concini as the Marshal of France and Armand du Plessis, bishop of Luçon, the future Cardinal Richelieu. Concini, however, had made the most dangerous enemy he could in France: Louis XIII. On 24 April 1617, by order of the king, the captain of the king's guard assassinated Concini, effectively ending the regency and allowing Louis to finally seize control of his state.⁴⁰ While Marie was forced into exile at the château of Blois, the new king attempted to reverse the troubles created by his mother, but her inability to stabilize the government before his seizure of power had brought France to the brink of another decade of civil war.

With his mother and her allies powerless, Louis XIII was again able to address resistance from the Huguenots. As King of Navarre, Louis commanded the provincial authorities in Béarn to allow the practice of Catholicism among the overwhelming Protestant population. When his subjects refused to obey, the king took advantage of a small army he had stationed in Anjou. Marching them into Pau, the capital of Béarn, Louis restored Catholic worship in the city cathedral in 1620 before seizing the fortress of Naverreins. His replacement of local officials with Catholics set off the last of the full-scale war against the Huguenots.

After the fall of Béarn, Huguenot forces assembled in La Rochelle. In the summer of 1621, Louis marched an army into the Protestant heartland, forcing several cities into surrender. Peace was reached by 1622, leaving Huguenot forces with the two fortresses of Montauban and

⁴⁰ Collins, *Tribes to Nation*, 301.

La Rochelle as their only strongholds. But fighting resumed in 1625 as Huguenot leaders began to rearm the southwest of France and in 1627, Louis laid siege to La Rochelle, hoping to end Protestant independence once and for all. English reinforcements slowed the process, however, and the brutal siege lasted over a year. This final war ended in 1629 by the Grace of Alès, which allowed Huguenots freedom of worship in traditional areas but permanently removed their right to fortifications – a move that would put French Protestants at the complete mercy of their king. Louis XIII had laid the foundation for the state to enforce, in theory, religious uniformity – a right that his son, Louis XIV, would later exercise to its fullest.

An Era of Cardinal Power

The conclusion of the French Wars of Religion in 1629 occurred at a time when France's political ambitions were shifting, both domestically and abroad. Changes to the French state under the rule of Henri IV carried through the seventeenth century, despite attempts by Marie de Médicis to dispose of his council members. The king's *premier ministre* began to amass a multitude of power and authority, beginning with the ascension of Armand-Jean du Plessis, cardinal de Richelieu.

Although the death of Louis XIII's favorite, Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes, led to a rapid increase in Richelieu's power, his rise to the king's council was altogether extraordinary even before d'Albert's death. Nominated by Henri IV himself, Richelieu was ordained priest and consecrated Bishop of Luçon on 17 April 1607.⁴¹ With the aid of his ally Henri Louis Chasteigner de La Roche-posay, Bishop of Poitiers, Richelieu was then elected as a representative

⁴¹ Geoffrey R. R. Treasure, *Cardinal Richelieu and the Development of Absolutism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 11. Due to Richelieu's young age at the time of his nomination by the king, he fell below the minimum age requirement to serve as bishop in France; after a trip to Rome to receive a dispensation from Pope Paul V, however, Richelieu could be consecrated at the age of 22.

of the clergy of Poitou at the Estates General of 1614 where he effectively won the attention of Marie de Médicis, positioning himself for a seat on her council – one that was awarded to him on 26 November 1616 with his appointment as Secretary of State.⁴² The queen regent’s exile to Blois meant a short fall for Richelieu – including the loss of his position on the Council – but a string of coinciding events made it possible for his second rising through the ranks: the death of Luynes was followed by the death of the Cardinal of Retz, opening up a place for a fourth cardinal in France – a position he received in September 1622; Richelieu was able to highlight the many downfalls of the *premier ministre* (the duc de La Vieuville), who was dismissed on 13 August 1624.⁴³ Richelieu was summoned to the position the following day.

Cardinal Richelieu’s main objectives were evident from the start. First, he wanted to consolidate the government’s power before weakening the dominance of the Habsburgs. To centralize the French state, Richelieu recognized the importance of questioning the rights and privileges of Protestants within a Catholic kingdom. Under the Edict of Nantes, the Huguenots maintained economic privileges that hindered the state’s ability to solve its financial crises. Ending the Wars of Religion with the siege of La Rochelle in 1627 solved two crucial problems for Richelieu.

The Grace of Alès resolved the first of these issues by removing the Huguenot “question” from France and enabling the king to strictly enforce one religion over his people without fear of armed rebellion – the importance being, as Geoffrey Treasure argues, that “there was no longer an armed republic within the monarchy.”⁴⁴ With Huguenot economic exemptions removed, the

⁴² Ibid, 26.

⁴³ Ibid, 34.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 106.

crown opened new communities of French people to taxation, bringing in increased revenues for the state that allowed it to finance involvement in foreign wars. This ability for a more aggressive foreign policy would allow the state to fulfill Richelieu's other ambitions.

Secondly, with the Huguenot question answered, Richelieu was able to turn his attention toward challenging Habsburg power. The Habsburg dynasty, which by then held the crowns of Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, Spain (including the Spanish Netherlands), and the Holy Roman Empire, politically and geographically surrounded France and curbed its ambitions to extend its borders on the continent. Richelieu's drive to defeat the Habsburgs led to France's entrance into the Thirty Years' War with a declaration of war against Spain in 1635, although early French campaigns exposed the weaknesses in the French army that had initially made Richelieu reluctant to commit to the war.⁴⁵ In lieu of solid reforms, Richelieu purchased both the rank of Admiral of France and the command of the galleys; he made himself *surintendant-général de la navigation et commerce de France*, and filled the remaining military and naval positions he purchased with members of his family.⁴⁶ He ordered every French port city to build one ship for royal service and before his death, this new navy had already begun to win battles, while his placements in top military positions strengthened his power and influence.⁴⁷ The state during Richelieu's era became a vast network of relationships – a network that would crumble after his death, with the succession of another cardinal who would have to work from the ground up to build his own unique web of connections.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 135.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 182.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Jules Mazarin's early career began as Richelieu's health was waning. Serving under Richelieu himself, Mazarin's assistance to Louis XIII positioned him to succeed the cardinal. When he was awarded the position of cardinal in 1641, his ascension to *premier ministre* was all but guaranteed.⁴⁸ He came to power in December 1642 and Louis XIII died several months later in May. Louis' wife, Anne of Austria, became queen regent with Mazarin close by her side and the challenges of society, religion, and war that faced Richelieu were soon continued with Anne and Mazarin; added to this, however, was their status as "foreigners" in control of an unfamiliar culture. As Treasure states in his biography of Mazarin, "Richelieu's philosophy and statecraft had been tempered by his knowledge of the worlds of the law and the Church, above all the Poitevin world of his youth."⁴⁹ Mazarin's knowledge of the French state and French society was minimal at best, and his Italian background – paired with the Spanish background of the queen – did nothing to quell public opinions. Society at all levels turned away from Mazarin, and the legitimacy of the regency was constantly in question. Unrest began to surface at the upper levels of society in 1648 when, at age nine, Louis XIV held a *lit de justice* before the Parlement of Paris to force the registration of fiscal reform to solve the crisis created by the costly war with Spain.⁵⁰ The forced *lit de justice* of the young king was seen as the ultimate example of political corruption, and the social unrest that had been building under the regency finally erupted into

⁴⁸ Geoffrey R. R. Treasure, *Mazarin: The Crisis of Absolutism in France* (London: Routledge, 1995), 51.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 68.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 109; *lit de justice*: "bed of justice" (in reference to the make-shift bed of pillows the king sat upon); under the Ancien Régime, these were special sessions of the Parlement of Paris called for by the king to force the register of certain royal edicts. Not every appearance of the king in the Parlement occasioned a formal *lit de justice*.

complete civil war. The Fronde, lasting from 1648 to 1653, became the first real test to Mazarin's authority and the inspiration for Louis XIV's absolutist ambitions.

The Fronde: Inspiration for Absolute Power

The series of Frondes (or smaller civil wars) that erupted in Paris had their origins within the provinces. Threats from Mazarin and Anne to abolish the *paulette* – a move that would strip the venality of purchased offices – angered officers, and demands from the state for new taxes angered both officers and peasants who were already overburdened. Rebellions began to crop up as the ordinary people of France refused to pay their taxes to support a state run by an Italian and a Spaniard.⁵¹ The Parlement of Paris sullenly accepted the reforms and taxes forced upon them by the *lit de justice* of 1648, and the resistance of the courts was plainly clear to the queen regent.

Fear inspired by the English Civil War – occurring just across the Channel from 1642 to 1648 – spurred Anne to accuse the Parlement of Paris in the spring of 1648 of “wanting to make a republic.”⁵² This accusation sparked the Fronde Parlementaire, pitting the parlements and lower courts against Anne and Mazarin. The Parlement demanded that the regent be held accountable to it for her actions, arguing it served in the best interest of the king – and that ultimately the source of its authority came from no one but the king himself. This first Fronde led to a decisive constitutional outcome, as Mazarin established the principle that the parlements only served a primarily judicial function, separating the courts from the king and from the state – a role that would become a cornerstone in Louis XIV's future policies, pushing the state ever closer to absolutism.

⁵¹ Collins, *Tribes to Nation*, 341-342.

⁵² Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Ancien Régime: A History of France, 1610-1774* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1996), 113-114.

While problems in the capital were being resolved, the fires of rebellion in the countryside proved more difficult to extinguish. Opposition shifted from the judges to members of the princely elite.⁵³ As the provinces began to fall, the royal army responded quickly to crush opposition. The young Louis XIV was paraded through the countryside to inspire support for the monarchy as royal forces pacified Normandy and restored royal authority and order to Bordeaux and Burgundy. The intendants, which had been removed by the Fronde Parlementaire, returned to the provinces by 1653. Although peace was restored, the memories of the Frondes would continue to be another inspiration for Louis XIV's consolidation of power.

With the nobility and the parlements in check, Mazarin was able to revert his attention to the Franco-Spanish War. Spain had dominated the politics of Europe, but France had emerged united from the Wars of Religion and from the Fronde with an even stronger state. The war curbed Spanish Habsburg aggression, but gained little for France in regards to territory.⁵⁴ The Peace of the Pyrenees was signed in 1659, handing France a few territories along its northern border, but most importantly positioning France for political domination of Europe. For Mazarin, war – both foreign and domestic – was the great challenge to his consolidation of power.

When Cardinal Mazarin died in March 1661, Louis XIV was able to begin his long, personal reign. The death of his *premier ministre* left the position vacant – as Louis decided to serve as his own chief minister – but it also showed the true impact of the cardinal on a young Louis. The king ordered full court mourning, the first and only time it had been done for a person who was not a member of the royal family.⁵⁵ The consolidation of power by both Cardinal

⁵³ Collins, *Tribes to Nation*, 348.

⁵⁴ Treasure, *Mazarin*, 261.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 309.

Richelieu and Cardinal Mazarin allowed Louis to fully take control of the government and lead France to glory. Louis XIV became the embodiment of the absolutist state in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, inheriting the legacy of two *premier ministres* who strengthened the state's authority both domestically and abroad.

The Consolidation of Power: Image of the Sun King

On 7 June 1654, Louis XIV, at the age of 15, received the sacred anointing and was crowned King of France and Navarre in the presence of all the great nobles and the princes of the blood – save for Condé, who was still at war with Mazarin.⁵⁶ Louis bound himself to the kingdom, to his nobility, and to the Church. Now supported by an adult, crowned king, Mazarin was able to reestablish his authority in the years leading up to his death. Louis remained loyal to the cardinal, and it was not until Mazarin's death in 1661 that he would sincerely rule his kingdom alone, beginning the longest reign of any European monarch.

While Louis XIV has become the representation of European absolutism, the mechanisms of an absolutist state emerged as early as Henri IV. In his article, “Was There a Bourbon Style of Government?,” Richard Bonney argues that while the early years of Bourbon rule brought no significant changes to the French government, the systemization of the sale of offices in 1604 resulted in the increasing power of the king's council.⁵⁷ These positions as royal councilors were received by appointment in an attempt to separate them from venal offices, where someone could purchase power in a sovereign court – for a hefty price. The council became elevated within the

⁵⁶ While the Fronde as a civil war had ended in France by 1653, the war continued on as an extension of the Franco-Spanish War until 1659. Condé openly entered into the service of the king of Spain, defying both Mazarin and the newly crowned Louis XIV.

⁵⁷ Richard Bonney, “Was There a Bourbon Style of Government?” in *From Valois to Bourbon: Dynasty, State & Society in Early Modern France*, ed. Keith Cameron (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), 161.

state, until the monarch himself absorbed most of its positions. When Louis XIV assumed the position of his own *premier ministre*, he continued a cycle that had begun early in the 1620s. The main officers of the crown – the constable, admiral, chancellor, surintendant of finances, and colonel-general of the infantry – had all traditionally wielded the most power, and all but the chancellor were abolished by the reign of Louis XIV, although the office’s role was greatly reduced by keeping its holder from the highest royal council. Louis XIV absorbed the positions of constable, admiral, and colonel-general, giving him the power to name virtually every officer in the French military.⁵⁸

To firmly consolidate his authority and end any unwavering support, Louis XIV took another note from his grandfather, famously building the image of the Sun King. In his article, “Henri IV: King of Reason?,” Denis Crouzet outlines the creation of a divine ruler in the person of Henri IV, a characteristic of absolute rule that would become the most effective under Louis XIV.⁵⁹ After the conclusion of the Wars of Religion, Henri IV began identifying with Hercules, implying that the king was immortal: he would never die “because he [was] the incarnation of the Reason of the world and Reason is eternal.”⁶⁰ The personalization of divinity in the person of the monarch was solidified in this personification of Henri as the King of Reason: his succession would ensure the divine rule of the French monarch upon his death. This was a renewed and amplified royalty: “in this new form of royalty the king is less an image of God... but rather God made man through the divine reason of fate that he represents and which mark him out as the

⁵⁸ Collins, *Tribes to Nation*, 352.

⁵⁹ Denis Crouzet, “Henri IV: King of Reason?” in *From Valois to Bourbon: Dynasty, State & Society in Early Modern France*, ed. Keith Cameron (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), 93.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 94.

providential accomplishment of a human order called upon to conform to the universal order.”⁶¹ In this sense, the monarchy was successful where the Reformation had failed: the divine nature of the monarch’s rule relieved “eschatological tensions,” that is the unrest caused by fears of the end of humanity.⁶² Ensuring the continuation of the State after the monarch’s death, this divine rule also ensured the recognition of the government’s sovereignty by its subjects.

The creation of the Sun King became immortalized in the architecture of the palace of Versailles. Expanded from his father’s hunting lodge, construction on the symbol of French absolutism began in 1664. Although construction on the château would continue until 1710, Louis moved his court from the traditional capital of Paris to his new palace in 1682. The imagery of a powerful, centralized state was visible before even arriving at Versailles. The three avenues to Versailles – the Avenue de Paris, the Avenue de Saint-Cloud, and the Avenue de Sceaux – all converged on the grand Parade Ground, forming straight lines emanating out from the palace like the rays of the sun.⁶³ From the Parade Ground, the terrain gently sloped upward towards the courts outside; the Marble Court, at the very entrance of the palace, is over-looked by the balcony of the king’s apartment,⁶⁴ allowing every visitor entering the palace to be seen by the king.

Consisting of seven chambers, construction of the king’s apartment began in 1671; although the apartment was fit for habitation by 1673, its complete decoration was not finished

⁶¹ Ibid, 97.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Charles Mauricheau-Beaupré, *Versailles: History and Art, Official Guide* (Paris: Musées Nationaux, 1949), 1.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 2.

until 1682.⁶⁵ The symbolism of the chamber's seven rooms, which were originally meant to represent the seven planets, was decided upon in 1678. The rooms would become the chambers of Plenty, Venus, Diana, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter (which has long since been destroyed) and Apollo. Used as the throne room, the Chamber of Apollo included a series of Fame spreading the glory of the king to the four corners of the world.⁶⁶ From his apartment, Louis XIV would travel daily to the royal chapel by way of the Hall of Mirrors. Connecting the War Salon at one end to the Peace Salon at the other, the long, mirror-lined hall depicts the glory of Louis and the strength of France. The ceiling of the War Salon portrays Louis conquering Germany, Spain, and Holland, contrasted against the murals of the Chamber of Peace portraying the peace that France had brought to the world, perpetuated by the rule of Louis XIV.⁶⁷

Louis XIV's rule at Versailles, however, came at a price – both literally and figuratively. The construction of the palace placed further financial strain on a population that was already burdened by the taxes necessary to fund decades of warfare. The money saved by Henri IV had long since run out, pushing the crown to search for new ways to raise money and solve an increasingly immense financial problem, which included securing permissions for Jews to help with importing foreign specie and moneylending. Meanwhile, Louis' palace had created an image of a strong, central ruler, but it had also become the symbol of a king removed from his people and of a man bent on conquering the rest of Europe. Although Louis had made several small territorial gains from the Peace of the Pyrenees, France's northern and eastern borders remained widely vulnerable, leading him to fight a costly series of wars from 1667 until 1684.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 31.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 39.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 42.

Louis and his advisors turned toward four key areas: the southern Netherlands, the Franche-Comté, Alsace, and Lorraine.⁶⁸ Although France had traditionally claimed Flanders, the Franche-Comté had never been a part of the kingdom. The only connections to the German-speaking region of Alsace lay deep in the past: the area was connected to Roman Gaul, before being removed and then attached again to the Frankish kingdoms of the sixth century. The ducs of Lorraine had meddled in the politics of France for centuries, and absorbing the duchy would easily put an end to it.⁶⁹

France's key to claiming the southern Netherlands rested wholly in the king's marriage to Maria-Theresa of Spain. With the Spanish crown immersed in bankruptcy, her father was unable to pay the substantial dowry owed to France, forcing the young couple to make the customary renunciation of rights against Philip IV's estate in return for her dowry; Philip's failure to pay opened up the possibility of a lawsuit, an opportunity Louis took advantage of when Charles II took the throne in 1667. Basing his claim to the territory as dowry compensation on the clause of devolution, Louis marched an army of 70,000 men into Artois and Flanders, seizing the most important towns, and poised France to take Brussels and Ghent. The prince de Condé also seized the Franche-Comté, realizing two of Louis' goals in one fast movement. This quick seizure of land prompted England and the Dutch Republic to become involved, pressuring Louis to settle an agreement with Spain. France returned the Franche-Comté but kept the major towns of Artois and Louis' thirst to expand.

Louis XIV's wars for expansion continued northward, pitting the French directly against the Dutch. An alliance with England in 1670 along with the neutrality of the small German states

⁶⁸ As we shall see below, the regions of Alsace and Lorraine were particularly important for bringing Jewish communities into France.

⁶⁹ Collins, *Tribes to Nation*, 392.

of the Rhine left a clear field for Louis to attack. French forces overran most of the country, but missed a crucial opportunity to capture Amsterdam. The shift in Dutch power from the de Witt brothers to William III perpetuated a war that Louis could have easily ended before. England withdrew in 1674, and the King of Spain sided with the Dutch. Instead of driving further north, Louis focused his attention eastward where Condé retook the Franche-Comté, and Turenne helped consolidate France's claims to Alsace. The Peace of Nijmegen in 1679 granted France the Franche-Comté, recognition of rights in Alsace, and the consolidation of gains in the north in exchange for Flanders and Brabant.⁷⁰

The conclusion of the Dutch War provided Western Europe with only a short reprieve. The Great Turkish War in the East diverted the attention of the other powers, allowing Louis to march into the Rhineland, demanding the city of Strasbourg accept French dominance. Two years later, while Europe was occupied with the Turkish siege of Vienna, Louis struck again, seizing Luxembourg. Public opinion across Europe denounced Louis, as France was the only leading power to not send troops to the aid of Austria, using them instead to conquer disputed territories elsewhere in Europe. With the siege of Vienna concluded, France signed the Truce of Regensburg in 1684 with Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, permitting Louis to keep the Franche-Comté, Alsace, and Luxembourg.

Although the wars of expansion and the construction of Versailles would create financial crises that would plague France for the next century, the state emerging under Louis XIV was the strongest it had ever been. Louis' wars added Artois, Alsace, the Franche-Comté, and Lorraine under the French Crown, extending France to the Rhine and over the Meuse River in the northeast. Geographically, France was becoming closer to the France of modern times;

⁷⁰ Ibid, 395.

religiously, France was ever more entrenched in Catholicism. Challenges between the king and the papacy erupted over who would keep the revenues of bishoprics in southern France between the death of one bishop and the consecration of the next. The promulgation of the Four Gallican Articles in 1681 rejected Pope Innocent XI's claims to supreme authority, creating a clear divide between the Pope and the French (Gallican) Church.⁷¹ Innocent XI vehemently rejected the Articles and refused to confirm appointments of Louis XIV, a move that would eventually lead to the War of the League of Augsburg in 1687.

Before France would fight another war, Louis XIV promulgated the edict that would change the way he was seen throughout Europe: the Edict of Fontainebleau. Issued in 1685, Fontainebleau revoked the Edict of Nantes, stripping France's Protestants of all the rights guaranteed to them almost a century earlier.⁷² Despite Louis' own intolerance for religious unity within France, the Revocation also came in response to the desires of his subjects in many regions. The Estates of Languedoc – a province that had traditionally been heavily populated by Huguenots – had banned Protestant participation in 1640, an attitude that was mirrored by the anti-Huguenot parlement of Toulouse. Violent attacks were launched against Huguenots across the Midi, and Catholics burned *temples* in Nimes and Montpellier.

The absolute state created by Louis XIV functioned for over one hundred years before the rupture of French society in the Revolution of 1789. The Sun King's refusal to call the Estates General preserved the subservience of the people to their monarch, without any direct involvement in government. While France became the model for high European court life, the ordinary French subject drowned in the taxes required to fund his king's wars for glory and

⁷¹ Ladurie, *The Ancien Régime*, 190.

⁷² François-André Isambert et. al, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises depuis l'an 1420 jusqu'à la révolution de 1789, tome XIX* (Paris: 1825), 180-183.

power. “*L’État, c’est moi*” – the phrase always famously associated with the king – coupled with his wholehearted belief in *un roi, un loi, une foi*⁷³ permitted the king’s policies to directly affect every aspect of his people’s lives – if the king is the state, then his personal faith (Catholicism) would be the faith of his people. The king’s quest for glory would become France’s quest for glory.

Although France’s absolutism shifted with the death of Louis XIV on 1 September 1715, France would never return to the medieval state of the Valois kings.⁷⁴ While the eighteenth century would continue to be marked by war, religious conflict, and failed reform, the absolute state established by Louis XIV had changed the distribution of power across the kingdom. Even though Louis XV had left France with a state that was increasingly falling under the control of the king’s ministers, the consolidation of power that had stripped local elites of their power and sovereignty had persisted. French culture and society changed with the state, as the ideas of the Enlightenment circulated throughout the *salon* culture of Paris – far removed from the court at Versailles – and new opinions shaped the ways in which the upper levels viewed certain parts of the French population. Although it had begun by the costly wars of Louis XIV, France’s dire economic situation perpetuated the slow crumbling of the state that had begun under Louis XV. Attempts at political and economic reform by the young Louis XVI accelerated this collapse, leading to political revolution and the redefinition of participation in government. For the first time in France’s long history, Frenchmen used the words *citoyen* and *citoyenne*: citizen. The architects of the French Revolution of 1789 rewrote what it meant to be a citizen of a new French

⁷³ French: one king, one law, one faith.

⁷⁴ Ladurie, *The Ancien Régime*, 279.

nation, opening the door for France's minorities to become involved in a state that was no longer controlled by the Most Christian King.

Conclusions

The long series of civil conflicts known as the French Wars of Religion left a legacy upon the French monarchy that propelled it toward absolutism. The consolidation of power that began early in the reign of Henri IV ushered in new ways of dealing with France's religious minorities and how they would serve a role in a diverse kingdom. Centuries of warfare and violence prompted the state to diversify its means of collecting taxes, creating opportunities for new means of involvement at all levels of society.

The crown's quest for territorial expansion brought new and diverse people under the rule of one king, although these wars plunged the kingdom into deeper financial trouble. France's fiscal situation would ultimately propel the kingdom toward revolution, but the crown's need for more money often led it to turn a blind eye to occurrences that may have proved contradictory to its religious conviction. The repression of the Huguenots had occupied the monarchy for over a century, but the existence of Jewish communities in France filled a societal void that ran deeper than religious devotion: the quest for money.

Chapter 2

The Reality of Jewish Communities in France under the Ancien Régime

The religious climate of Ancien Régime France was both complex and dangerous for any societal minority. Conflicts between Catholics and Huguenots tore the kingdom apart during decades of civil war, and although France's Jewish populations were not directly involved in these wars, the outcomes of fighting did affect the way these communities functioned. The difficulty in studying these communities, however, consists in the traditionally separate treatment of each. Historians have yet to address any treatment of France's pre-Revolution Jews as a whole, often times remarking on the vast physical distance that separated each community. This sporadic placement of Jews across France, Solomon Posener argues, lends itself to the absence of a common historiography. Posener states that, "French Jewry under the old regime and up to the Revolution did not form one organic whole," and that their settlements in various provinces meant that they could not be united "by the bonds of an organization of their own nor by the ties of national solidarity."⁷⁵ Writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often referred to the Jews by their various communities – the Jews of Avignon, the Jews of Nancy, the Portuguese Jews, etc. – which further lends to separate treatment of their histories. The task, then, is to unite these communities together by looking at the Jewish population as a whole in an attempt to uncover the similarities that appear in the traditional treatments of their histories.

⁷⁵ Posener, "The Social Life," 196.

The Resettlement

By the outbreak of the Wars of Religion in 1562, France had already experienced a major resettlement of Jews into the south. In theory, France should have been free of Jews given the last expulsion of the Jews that occurred on 17 September 1394 under Charles VI. This expulsion had placed the Jews and their property under the special protection of Charles to avoid any violence caused by the edict. Difficulties collecting debts delayed this expulsion, and their right to collect past dues was taken away in 1397: any remaining debts were erased, and royal officers burned the documents proving any owed money, without appeal.⁷⁶ These Jews were escorted to France's borders by royal troops, where they found refuge in Alsace, Lorraine, Aquitaine, the Comtat Venaissin, and Provence – areas that still remained outside the crown's authority.

Jews slowly began to reenter France during the fifteenth century as they fled religious persecution in both Spain and Portugal. Although an attempt had been made at the end of the fourteenth century to convert Spain's Jews, these *conversos* proved to be another problem entirely for the Spanish crown; as they integrate themselves into the Christian population, suspicions arose that *conversos* were still privately practicing their Jewish faith, especially as they climbed higher in the social hierarchy. Mass conversions also undercut the radical distinction between Catholics and Jews, destabilizing the foundations of Christian privilege and

⁷⁶ *Ordonnances des Rois de France de la troisième race, recueillies par ordre chronologique. Septième volume, contenant les ordonnances de Charles VI. Données depuis le commencement de l'année 1383. jusqu'à la fin de l'année 1394* (Paris: l'Imprimerie Royale, 1745) <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k118973z>; for the specific edict, refer to *Lettres qui portent que celles par lesquelles il est ordonné que tous les Juifs sortiront du Royaume, seront exécutées; & qu'on leur fera payer ce qui leur est dû par les Chrétiens*, 675.

identity.⁷⁷ Inspired by public opinion, the Church renewed the inquisitorial tribunal to observe, judge, and ultimately condemn those who had “relapsed.” The papal bull *Exigit sinceras devotionis affectus* of 1 November 1478 permitted Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabelle of Castile the power to establish an Inquisition of the Faith, and through the use of both secret informers and torture to collect testimonies and confessions, the crown had gathered enough evidence by 1481 to burn those who had “relapsed on their faith due to their errors.”⁷⁸ Spain’s Jews were faced with two options: for the *conversos*, an increased inquisitorial repression with the confiscation of goods, and the potential for imprisonment or death by fire; for openly practicing Jews, only full exile would protect them. In 1480, Isabelle and Ferdinand began pushing the Jews from Andalusia, and by March 1492, between 200,000 and 300,000 Jews had been expelled from Spain.⁷⁹

Spanish Jews were initially welcomed to settle in Portugal in the city of Porto, upon the payment of fifty *maravedís* per family, by King João II. His death in 1495 brought his son Manuel I to the throne whose marriage to Isabella of Aragon, the heir presumptive to Ferdinand and Isabella, brought the Portuguese crown under the influence of Spain. Political pressure brought Manuel to pronounce the expulsion of Portugal’s Jews on 5 December 1496.⁸⁰ Fleeing

⁷⁷ David Nirenberg, “Spanish ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’ in an Age of Mass Conversion” in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, ed. Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), 159.

⁷⁸ Gérard Nahon, *Juifs et judaïsme à Bordeaux* (Bordeaux: Librairie Mollat Bordeaux, 2003), 34; Nahon’s description of those Jews who were burned during the first *auto-da-fé* as those relapsed who had been « ...des convertis convaincus d’avoir judaïsé, d’être retombés dans leur erreur. »

⁷⁹ Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 375.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

their country, the *conversos*, or *marranos* and *portugais* as they would later be referred to, settled at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Tarbes, Bordeaux, Marseille, and Montpellier.⁸¹ The Jewish population of Bordeaux in particular expanded after its annexation at the conclusion of the Hundred Years' War, as the city experienced a mass exodus with the withdrawal of English forces. As commerce began to suffer, Louis XI issued a decree in 1474 inviting foreigners to settle freely in the city. The *portugais* and *marranos* answered this call, filling the roles left by English merchants. Their rights and privileges to settle were not fully recognized until 1550, however, but this will be discussed below.

The resettlement in the East has a much more complex story. While the Jews of Aquitaine filled a void that was an economic necessity, France's eastern populations faced the challenges of warfare against the Germans as the French kings continued attempts to expand their territory. For this reason alone, the eastern provinces – and newly gained territories – were ruled and governed differently than the rest of France. Coupled with the long and complex cultural history of the territory, particularly in cities such as Metz, it is much easier to see how the area experienced a slightly different resettlement.

Located between the Frankish and Germanic kingdoms, the people of Metz had been outside of any “established” culture since before the Middle Ages. In her work *One King, One Law, Three Faiths: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in Seventeenth-Century Metz*, Patricia Behre-Miskimin argues that Metz was “too Celtic to be Gallic, too Gallic to be Roman, too

⁸¹ Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment*, 15; Bordeaux had been annexed into France after the Battle of Castillon in 1453, during the Hundred Years' War with England. Marseille was added to France in 1437 by René d'Anjou, comte de Provence. Although Montpellier had fallen into the kingdom in 1349, the monarch's power really could not be exercised in the region until the creation of the parlement of Toulouse in 1420.

Roman to be German, too German to be French.”⁸² The movement of tribes through the region meant the city changed hands several times between Roman conquest and the era of Frankish control. After seven centuries of Frankish rule, the area fell under Imperial⁸³ protection and the Germanic influences on the city took hold once again. The rotation of cultural and political influences left Metz with a wealthy but pieced-together legacy: “...fortifications and an aqueduct but also a tradition of warfare and of being on the wrong side of military siege. Perhaps the most successful conqueror of all, the nascent Church, united the region’s disparate beliefs under the Christian rubric, infused with the symbols and images that would inspire and oppress successive generations of Messins.”⁸⁴

By the sixteenth century, increasing tensions between France and the Habsburgs brought a renewed wave of violence and fighting in and around Metz. Hostilities between the Spanish-born Charles V, elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1519, and François I of France saw an increase in the number of transient soldiers in the region. The sharp rise in warfare depleted the city’s fortunes, meaning hardship and peril became an inherent part of Messin daily life. The ability of the city to maintain its independence from both German and French influence was ultimately tested during these times of war. The city’s independence was also tested by its relationship with both Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and François I, as was evident in June 1544 as Metz prepared for a visit from the emperor. Charles was met by guards at the city’s gates and was

⁸² Patricia Behre-Miskimin, *One King, One Law, Three Faiths: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in Seventeenth-Century Metz* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 3.

⁸³ “Imperial” in reference to the Holy Roman Empire; while Metz fell under Germanic protection, the city had managed to establish its own independent kingdom after Frankish influence pulled out of the region by the twelfth century.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

barred from entering until he had sworn to respect the city's privileges and not allow any violence to come upon its people.⁸⁵ The symbolism of this meeting was crucial: in an era in which the symbols of the city gates and their keys represented both security and civic pride, a request to meet a crowned ruler outside of a city's walls was, symbolically, a major component of a town's defenses. Although technically an Imperial city within Charles' realm, Metz's mixed Celtic-Gallic heritage set it apart from the other *Reichstädte* of the emperor. The hybrid status of the city's culture coupled with the insistence to meet outside the city gates sent a message to Charles that Metz would not compromise its independence and fall under German rule once again. As Behre-Miskimin states, the local leaders toiled relentlessly to ensure that any doubts over the emperor's visit were quelled: "The emperor might come, and then might go, but the same local men would still manage the courts and claims of the Messin people."⁸⁶

Crowned three years after Charles' visit to Metz, King Henri II of France would have learned from his father, François I, of Metz's unique cultural hybridity. While he showed no general interest in the city itself, Henri saw the city's location as a valuable military base in the region, and as a crucial launching point to forge a route to the Rhine. With this in mind, Henri arrived in Metz in 1552 as a conqueror – a king who had military aspirations in the region, and who knew of how the French could benefit from the city. The contrast between Henri's entrance and Charles' is extraordinary: Henri took his oath not only within the city's gates, but in front of the cathedral at the very heart of Metz. While his oath swore no further involvement in Messin

⁸⁵ Gaston Zeller, *La Réunion de Metz à la France* (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1926), 213.

⁸⁶ Behre-Miskimin, *One King, One Law, Three Faiths*, 9.

government at the conclusion of war with the Habsburgs, many saw the inevitability of French ascendancy.⁸⁷

The crucial difference between the visits of Charles V and Henri II lay in the magistrates: when Henri met with them in 1552, new magistrates had already replaced the hardline ones Charles had met with in 1544. Henri also swore to relinquish all control of the city the day his troops left its walls. His success, then, remained in the simple fact that he would not let his troops leave. Henri II entered Metz with a force that would have represented an unquestionable threat to his power, with estimates ranging between 40,000 and 100,000 troops.⁸⁸ After staying in the city for three days, the king left a garrison of 3,500 men still in place headed by a military governor who was in charge not only of the soldiers' conduct, but also of civic order in Metz. Henri ordered the local populace disarmed and required the city's magistrates to take an oath supporting French efforts against the Holy Roman Empire. The city was taken by France and despite a later attempt by Charles to reclaim it, French troops faced no real threat from the Imperial army.⁸⁹

When France seized control of Metz in 1552, no Jews resided legally in either the city or the surrounding area. While Jews were barred from settling throughout the kingdom,⁹⁰ four Jewish families were permitted into the city in 1564, and their numbers grew through the seventeenth century in tandem with the growing influence of the French crown over the city's

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 17.

⁸⁹ Zeller, *La Réunion*, 415.

⁹⁰ While this seems contradictory to Jews settling in southern France, the Jews who settled in Aquitaine, and particularly in Bordeaux, were permitted to under the pretense that they were converted to Christianity. Those who were allowed into Metz were openly-practicing their Jewish faith.

government. The initial exceptions afforded to the Jews of Metz, however, were only possible due to the fractured nature of the French state during the sixteenth century. Administrative disunity allowed exceptions to be made in provinces that could benefit economically from these privileges, and permissions were ultimately afforded on the borders because they were geographically and politically separate from the core territory of France. The provinces along the eastern border were ruled as occupied territories until the Revolution in 1789, and the necessities of garrison were the crown's main concern, not who peopled the area.⁹¹ By the seventeenth century, however, the crown's influence over affairs within the city had increased considerably, allowing it to better protect Jewish economic interests – which had greatly aligned with the state's interest in boosting commerce in the region.⁹²

Political Stability: the *Lettres patentes*

For these communities to thrive and grow, the Jews of these separate regions required royal authority – through the form of *lettres patentes*⁹³ – to claim any establishment of residency in a given area. These *lettres*, then, served two functions: first and foremost, they gave legitimacy to the Jews in their respective communities.⁹⁴ In order to establish themselves as habitants (and not citizens, as the term could not and would not be used until the Revolution) of a town or city, the Jews needed to apply for these special *lettres*, which would grant them specific

⁹¹ Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment and the Jews*, 19.

⁹² Behre-Miskimin, *One King, One Law, Three Faiths*, 48.

⁹³ A monarch issued *lettres patentes*, or “letters patent,” generally to grant an office, right, title, or status to a person or group of people.

⁹⁴ Each community would be responsible for applying for their own separate *lettres patentes* – the *lettres* issued to Bordeaux, for example, had no legitimacy anywhere else in the kingdom. These would then have to be renewed with each subsequent king, as will be discussed later, to continue the rights and privileges granted by their predecessor.

rights and privileges. Without them, the Jews could not establish a legitimate community anywhere nor have their businesses and properties protected by the crown. Secondly, these *lettres patentes* directly increased the role of the king in the provinces, gradually strengthening his authority in the out-lying regions of his kingdom. By applying to the king and not through local royal authorities, the Jews of these various communities undermined the power of provincial authorities that the Jews felt had already abused their power.

Although the *portugais* had begun settling in around Bordeaux at the end of the fifteenth century, the community itself was not legally established until August 1550, with the issuance of their *lettres patentes* by King Henri II. But how did the Jews even receive these permissions, given the religious tensions in France? The complexity of the *lettres* issued to Bordeaux in 1550 rested in the fact that they were not issued to Jews, but rather they allowed for the legal establishment of a Portuguese community of “new Christians” in the kingdom: “...merchants and other Portuguese, known as ‘new Christians,’ have intentionally been sent through France to know – for they have shipped in our kingdom for some time – the great and good justice that is exercised here....”⁹⁵

With reservation, the Parlement registered the *lettres* on 22 December 1550, but the *portugais* would only be able to naturalize if their “heirs and those who would receive their property are natives of the kingdom.”⁹⁶ However, because Aquitaine had still retained much of its independence, the *lettres patentes* held no real effect when the parlement of Bordeaux refused

⁹⁵ Nahon, *Juifs et judaïsme*, 39. « Comme les marchands et autres Portugais, appelés nouveaux chrétiens, nous aient par gens exprès qu'ils sont envoyés par de çà, fait entendre qu'ayant connu, pour avoir depuis quelque temps en çà trafiqué en nôtre royaume, la grande et bonne justice qui s'exerce en ici lui »

⁹⁶ Ibid, 40. The term *régicole* is used in lieu of *citoyen*, as the concept did not exist in the sixteenth century. In this translation I have used “native of the kingdom” to show the distinction between a natural-born Frenchman and a naturalized inhabitant.

to register the king's edict.⁹⁷ It took 24 more years before the *marranos* and other “new Christians” would move to renew the *lettres*, now under the rule of Henri III. Their status, however, was questioned in the courts of Bordeaux before the request for renewal was sent, and after litigation, the parlement guaranteed protection to the “new Christians” leaving the *lettres* unregistered. Henri III's new *lettres patentes* responded directly to the parlement of Bordeaux and the *sénéchal* of Guyenne, issuing two edicts that the courts could not ignore. The parlement finally capitulated, registering both the edicts and the renewed *lettres* in 1580.⁹⁸

While the right of *marranos* to settle in the south depended solely on the will of the king, eastern seigneurs and municipalities guarded the right to admit Jews into their regions, because of the quick economic benefits that this right provided. Large charges could be imposed for the *droit d'exception* (for the exception of allowing a Jew into a Catholic territory), and carrying charges for the rights to live, raise children, marry, and conduct business were added to the extensive list of French taxes that these Jews would be responsible for. Although they were admitted to settle into the province on permission from the local seigneur, Jews in Alsace and Lorraine⁹⁹ still applied for *lettres patentes* – the added backing of the monarch's will meant further protection from their expulsion based on the whim of a local official who was attempting to exercise more power.

⁹⁷ While the seventeenth century would ultimately renew the dominance of the Parlement of Paris over all of France, edicts and laws were required to be registered by a parlement if it were to become effective in a region prior to the strengthening of the state under the Bourbon dynasty.

⁹⁸ Théophile Malvezin, *Histoire des Juifs à Bordeaux* (Marseille: Lafitte, 1976), 109-111.

⁹⁹ While the city of Metz is an important part of the province of Lorraine, the Jews of Metz are typically grouped into discussions of the Alsatian Jews. While Strasbourg had a Jewish population and should thus be considered the main component of Alsatian Jewry (given the economic importance of Strasbourg), Metz's population was much larger and therefore dominates discussions of Jews in eastern France.

Even though Bordeaux's *portugais* and "new Christian" community had gained considerable privileges, the death of Louis XIII in 1643 brought about the cycle of renewing the *lettres patentes* once more. As Zosa Szajkowski argues in his work, *Franco-Judaica*, "the dates of Letters patents granting privileges to Jews, or renewing privileges granted previously, should always be checked against the background of general events. With the death of a King the Jews... tried to secure as quickly as possible the renewal of the privileges granted them by the previous ruler."¹⁰⁰ Such was the case in Bordeaux with the ascension of Louis XIV to power. Their *lettres* were renewed by December 1656, and registered by the parlement of Bordeaux on 25 May 1658.¹⁰¹ The *lettres patentes* could be changed as time went on, as was evident with the final *lettres* issued to the Jews of Alsace before the Revolution:

Louis, by the grace of God, king of France and Navarre: To all those who present these letters, *salut*. We have held ourselves accountable to the established rules with respect to the Jews of our province of Alsace and, after weighing the advantages and disadvantages, we have found it necessary to bring forth several changes, by which we have proposed to reconcile, as far as has appeared possible to us, their interests with those of our subjects. To these and other causes, that we are moving, by the advice of our council and by our certain knowledge, full power and royal authority, we have said, ordained and enacted, and want to satisfy the following....¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Zosa Szajkowski, *Franco-Judaica, An Analytical Bibliography of Books, Pamphlets, Decrees, Briefs and Other Printed Documents Pertaining to the Jews in France 1500-1788* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1962), xiii.

¹⁰¹ Malvezin, *Histoire des Juifs à Bordeaux*, 130.

¹⁰² "Lettres patentes du Roi portant Règlement concernant les Juifs d'Alsace, du 10 juillet 1784" in Henry Lucien-Brun, *La condition des juifs en France depuis 1789* (Paris: Retaux, 1901), 317. « *Louis, par la grâce de Dieu, roi de France et de Navarre* : A tous ceux qui ces présentes lettres verront, *salut*. Nous nous sommes fait rendre compte des règles établies relativement aux Juifs de notre province d'Alsace et, après en avoir pesé les avantages et les inconvénients, Nous avons jugé nécessaire d'y apporter quelques changements, par lesquels Nous Nous sommes proposé de concilier, autant que cela Nous a paru possible, leurs intérêts avec ceux de nos sujets. A ces causes et autres, à ce Nous mouvant, de l'avis de notre conseil et

These *lettres* issued by Louis XVI on 10 July 1784 show the shift that had occurred over the decades of Jewish residency within France. Signed by both the king and Philippe Henri, maréchal de Ségur, the articles are written in the imperative *nous*, meaning the monarchy is “commanding” the following. Article II, for instance, demands royal intervention in the settlement of foreign Jews in Alsace: “Let us explicitly prohibit all lords, and every town and community that enjoys the right of a lordship to admit in the future any foreign Jew, until we have otherwise ordered.”¹⁰³ The purpose of these *lettres*, however, was not to guarantee the rights of the local nobility, but rather to ensure the privileges of the Jews who were being denied these privileges by the provincials. This can be seen most clearly in Article IX, in which the king “permits the established Jews of our province of Alsace, to engage in banking there, as well as all sorts of trading, business and commerce in wholesale and retail, with the understanding that they conform to all regulations on commerce.”¹⁰⁴ The concern of this particular article reflected the issue that became the main dispute between the Jews and Christians in each community: Jewish commerce.

de notre certaine science, pleine puissance et autorité royale, Nous avons dit, statué et ordonné, voulons et Nous plaît ce qui suit.... »

¹⁰³ Ibid, 318; « Faisons très expresses défenses à tous seigneurs et à toutes villes et communautés jouissant du droit de seigneurie d'admettre à l'avenir aucun Juif étranger, jusqu'à ce qu'il en ait été par Nous autrement ordonné. » The capitalization of the *Nous* in the original French text separates the king and Ségur apart from the rest of the state.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 319; « Nous avons permis et permettons aux Juifs établis dans notre province d'Alsace, d'y faire la banque, ainsi que toute sorte de négoce, trafic et commerce en gros et en détail, à la charge par eux de se conformer aux règlements concernant le commerce. Les autorisons, en outre, à y établir des manufactures et fabriques d'étoffes ou autres ouvrages, ainsi que des forges, verreries et faïenceries, à la charge par eux d'obtenir les permissions qui seraient requises pour nos sujets. Voulons, au surplus, que leurs livres ou registres soient tenus en langue vulgaire. Leur défendons expressément de s'y servir de la langue hébraïque, à peine de mille livres d'amende. »

The Traditional Roles of French Jews

Regardless of the community in which they had settled, France's Jewish populations were restricted in what economic roles they could play in society. While exceptions were made throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these communities were typically restricted to the "ancient roles" of moneylending and trading in used goods or clothes. The economic standing of Jewish families diversified, just as it did among Catholics – those who were lucky enough in their business to make monetary wealth continued to become wealthier as time passed, while the Jewish poor continued to remain at the lower end of society. Given the restrictions on their occupations one can easily question how Jews made money at all, particularly in the trade of old or used goods.

For all intents and purposes, the Jews filled an economic void that French merchants could not or did not want to fill. The issue of moneylending and usury had dominated Catholic Scholasticism for centuries, and the practice of lending money with interest was completely prohibited by the Catholic Church. As John Stuart Mill would argue in his influential work, *Principles of Economy*, this prohibition led to "the industrial inferiority" of Europe's Catholic regions, particularly when compared to Protestant regions that did not adhere to the same doctrines. Usury laws also limited the industry of Catholics by the financial capital at their disposal, and the capital "they can borrow from persons not bound by the same laws or religion as themselves."¹⁰⁵ The Jews of Europe would then fill this role, justifying their practices on the writings of the Old Testament. Both Jews and Catholics adhered to the Bible for their stances on moneylending, but their main difference lay in the distinction between "brother and other." Quoting Deuteronomy 23:19-20, that states, "You will not lend upon interest to your brother,

¹⁰⁵ John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* (Fairfield: August M. Kelley, 1987), 926.

interest on money, interest on victuals, interest on anything that is lent for interest. To a foreigner you may lend upon interest, but to your brother you shall not lend upon interest,” both Catholicism and Judaism defined their doctrine on moneylending upon who was and was not considered a brother. Because Jews had considered themselves the descendants of Jacob, their only brothers were other Jewish people and thus could not charge each other interest; Catholics, however, were not the brothers of Jews and therefore could be charged interest as foreigners or non-Jews. In contrast, Christians saw now difference between brothers and others, because all men descended from Adam and so they could not lend money on interest to anyone. Christian fathers also based their doctrine on the New Testament, citing the words Jesus said in his Sermon on the Plain: “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return” (Luke 6:35).¹⁰⁶

While the role of Jews as moneylenders ultimately bred economic jealousies and tensions between the Jewish and Christian communities, their importance to the economic growth of France was recognizable. As their role grew through the seventeenth century, Louis XIV’s economic minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, recognized that religious sentiments should not alter the political actions brought against the Jews. On 8 September 1673, Colbert corresponded to M. Rouillé, the intendant at Aix, over the issue of the Jewish presence in Marseille:

There is nothing more advantageous for the general benefit of commerce than to increase the number of people involved in it. What might not be of particular advantage to the inhabitants of Marseille is of a stronger importance to the kingdom as a whole. And moreover, the establishment of Jews was never banned for commercial reasons... but only by that of religion, and as this is

¹⁰⁶ See also Donna Kish-Goodling, “Using the Merchant of Venice in Teaching Monetary Economics” *The Journal of Economic Education* 29:4 (1998): 330-339, doi: 10.1080/00220489809595925; coincidentally, her argument includes the use of literature that features usury and what she calls the “historical dichotomy between Christian doctrines and Jewish law concerning charging interest during the Middle Ages.”

not a question of anything but commerce, it is not necessary to listen to any arguments that you may have against the Jews.¹⁰⁷

The importance of this short passage is two-fold: first, as the king's economic minister, Colbert's defense of the Jews once again brought increased royal protection against Catholic attacks on their rights and privileges. While the French state had taken many steps towards absolutism by 1673, this case is just one more example of how the monarchy was still attempting to increase its involvement in local affairs. Secondly, Colbert's acknowledgement of a "religious ban" on Jews settling in France, and yet his blatant disregard of it for the economic betterment of the kingdom, reinforces the crown's willingness to turn a blind eye to anything that would be contradictory to its laws – so long as the crown's interests were still met.

Several years later, however, Colbert had grown weary of the king's stance on the Jews, and rightly so. Louis XIV knew that he could – and ultimately should – chase the Jews from France. When a 1683 case of sacrilege involving a Jewish couple was brought to court in Bordeaux, Colbert feared what would happen if the couple was punished "rigorously" for the crime:

His Majesty knows that it would be dangerous to punish this crime harshly, because of the general expulsion of the Jews that would result from it; and as commerce for the most part is in the hands of this lot of people [the Jews], His Majesty knows very well that the shift that would happen to the kingdom would be

¹⁰⁷ Jean-Baptiste Colbert, *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert. II* ed. Pierre Clément (Paris: Imprimeur Impérial, 1873), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k51549z>, 679; « Il n'y a rien de si avantageux pour le bien général du commerce que d'augmenter le nombre de ceux qui le font, en sorte que ce qui n'est pas avantageux aux habitans particuliers de Marseille l'est pour au général du royaume. Et d'autant plus que l'establisement des Juifs n'a jamais este défendu pour le commerce... mais seulement pour la religion, comme il n'est à présent question que de commerce, il ne faut point écouter les propositions qui vous seront faites contre lesdits Juifs. »

dangerous, but at the same time His Majesty cannot suffer a continuation of the desecration that these people make.¹⁰⁸

Aware of the serious economic ramifications surrounding the case, Colbert instead advised the intendant in Bordeaux to no longer allow any more Jews to settle in the area. The tone of his letter, however, shows that while Colbert recognized the economic need for Jews to remain in Bordeaux, the crown also “cannot suffer the continuation of this desecration.” While no evidence has shown Colbert to be anti-Semitic, it is difficult to claim that, given his surroundings, he would have been in complete support of the Jews living in France.

Colbert, however, was fighting a losing battle. Within two years of his death, Louis XIV issued the *Code noir* in 1685, which not only defined the conditions of slavery in the empire, but also expelled the Jews from France’s overseas colonies.¹⁰⁹ Despite the extensive proof that they were economically beneficial to the success of colonial agriculture, particularly in Martinique,¹¹⁰ Jews in the Caribbean had become most active in the Dutch colonies, and were thus seen as an unwelcome Dutch influence on French colonial life. The following year, an important change

¹⁰⁸ Jean-Baptiste Colbert, *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert*. VI ed. Pierre Clément (Paris: Imprimeur Impérial, 1873), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k51554j>, 188-189; « Sa Majesté connoist qu’il seroit dangereux de punir rigoureusement ce crime, parce que l’expulsion générale de tous les Juifs s’ensuivroit ; et comme le commerce presque général est entre les mains de ces sortes de gens-là, Sa Majesté connoist bien que le mouvement qui en arriveroit au royaume seroit dangereux, mais aussy elle ne peut pas souffrir la continuation d’une profanation comme celle que ces gens-à font. »

¹⁰⁹ *Le code noir ou Édit du roy, servant de reglement pour le gouvernement & l’administration de justice & la police des isles françoises de l’Amerique, & pour la discipline & le commerce des negres & esclaves dans ledit pays. : Donné à Versailles au mois de mars 1685. Avec l’Edit du mois d’aoust 1685. portant établissement d’un conseil souverain & de quatre sieges royaux dans la coste de l’Isle de S. Domingue*. Paris: Chez Claude Girard, 1735. <https://archive.org/details/lesoeuvrespotiq01rivagoog>, 4.

¹¹⁰ See Jean-Baptiste Colbert, *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert*. III ed. Pierre Clément (Paris: Imprimeur Impérial, 1873), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k51551h>, 522-523.

took place for France's Jews. In order to stimulate the economy, Colbert's brother, Colbert de Croissy, who had assumed the role as secretary of state for foreign affairs, issued two decrees in 1686 and 1687 inviting foreigners of whatever quality, condition, or religion to trade in France.¹¹¹ Although they were not intended for the Jews, these did mark a turning point in the crown's stance on religion: the state had taken a step towards becoming completely indifferent to the religion of those who brought it economic advantages. The message was taken by the *marranos* of Bordeaux and Bayonne, who dropped their Christian pretenses and publically acknowledged their Jewish heritage. They continued their trades and traditional businesses, but as the *portugais* of Bordeaux transitioned from Christian to Jewish merchants, they established the *Sedaca* to care for their own poor. In order to fund this new organization, the Jews of Bordeaux raised 11,000 *livres* to purchase *rentes*, or government securities that allowed them to collect interest from the state.¹¹² The *Sedaca* did not change the way in which the Jews of Bordeaux participated in the local economy, but rather permitted the Jews an institutional structure that could effectively govern their community.

Meanwhile, in eastern France, the relationship between the crown and the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine depended wholly on monetary gains, and the monarch's need to inject specie into a war-ridden region. Jewish moneylenders, then, served the crown in two ways: first, they could bring liquid capital back into the economy by lending to individuals in exchange for material pledges; secondly, Jewish merchants could encourage trade and commerce from foreign markets, thus bringing even more money into France. The state's fixation on luring cash into the kingdom – particularly in depleted territories – worked in favor of the Jews in Metz. The most important

¹¹¹ Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment and the Jews*, 24.

¹¹² Malvezin, *Histoire des Juifs à Bordeaux*, 136.

contribution the Jews could make to the crown, however, was the increased tax base. Forced to pay large head taxes for the right to reside in the city, the Jews of Metz contributed heavily to the kingdom's coffers.¹¹³ Further still, referring back to the *lettres patentes* afforded to Alsace in July 1784, every Jewish marriage, birth, and death required a royal contract. If the contract was not signed before the initial event, the newlywed couple, parents of the child, or – by default – neighbors of the deceased were required to declare the event within two days, or face a one hundred *livre fine*.¹¹⁴

To their own credit, the Jews fully realized that their privilege to reside in Metz hinged on the payment of these taxes, and on their ability to bring foreign commerce into France. In defense against local critics, the Jews produced various receipts in October 1633 as evidence to show that they were fulfilling the terms set in their *lettres patentes*, among which were their annual payment of 300 *francs* to the local *hôpital*, their provisions for the maintenance and lodging of troops in the crown's garrison, and all of their annual fees.¹¹⁵ In 1647, the Jews reminded officials once again of the need for Jewish moneylending when they requested for simplifying lending procedures. It was an “open secret” that the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine made money in more than their permitted occupations. The Jews of Metz in particular, who dealt with precious metals, did not limit themselves solely to second-hand gold and silver objects. Utilizing dummy masters, Jews tried to enter into production, and as early as 1749 some had

¹¹³ Behre-Miskimin, *One King, One Law, Three Faiths*, 49.

¹¹⁴ *Lettres patentes du Roi*, 323.

¹¹⁵ Behre-Miskimin, *One King, One Law, Three Faiths*, 49; Behre-Miskimin utilizes the Archives Départementales de la Moselle in Metz – these particular receipts belong to Subseries 17J *Archives du Consistoire Israélite de la Moselle* Vol. 4, fol. 20-21.

even rented an iron factory at Zinswiller.¹¹⁶ Jews of Alsace and Lorraine freely sold horses quite frequently at markets, particularly in Strasbourg. Because of a continuous shortage of animals in the region, and especially after tough growing seasons, cities like Metz and Strasbourg did not object to Jews importing foodstuffs illegally. Anything beyond this – such as attempts by Jews to deal in gold, silver, and jewelry – was always met with decrees of prohibition. The traditional Jewish trades still remained the sale of livestock, trade in old or used things, and, most importantly, moneylending.¹¹⁷

In the few decades leading up to the Revolution in 1789, the treatment of Metz's Jewish population by local officials began to harden. Jews were repeatedly accused of illegally smuggling gold, silver, and jewels, moving the *Conseil d'État* to regulate the trade by ordering the syndics of the Jews of Metz to produce a list in 1769 of all those who were authorized to deal in precious metals, and to see that these dealers kept records for all pieces imported. A heavy fine was imposed on all those who were caught engaging in the trade without authorization, and local officials were authorized to search the homes and businesses of these Jews to confiscate any unregistered property.¹¹⁸ The pursuit of *billonage*, in which coins were smuggled from one locality to another, was prominent in Metz, but royal authorities were often unopposed to the practice, as it helped alleviate the shortage of specie in the province.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment and the Jews*, 118.

¹¹⁷ Elie Scheid, *Histoire des Juifs d'Alsace* (Paris: 1882), 151-187.

¹¹⁸ Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment and the Jews*, 122-123; Hertzberg cites the 11 April 1769 decree located in the Jewish Theological Seminary Library, New York.

¹¹⁹ Szajkowski, *Franco-Judaica*, 111; no. 1317, *De par le Roy. Jacques de la Grange... Intendant... en Alsace*, smuggling of coins into Alsace was first prohibited in 1684 by the intendant of the province.

Officials also turned a blind eye to how Jews provisioned royal armies. Constantly at war during the eighteenth century, the French military required large numbers of horses and amounts of grain – commodities the Jews could get from Germany, even during times of scarcity.¹²⁰ Those who provisioned the royal armies found themselves at the top of the economic ladder of eastern France. The importance of Jews for the king's interests were evident: nowhere else in France could a Jew live with as much security in his person and wealth as in Metz. Although the *portugais* of Bordeaux were publically living as Jews by the eighteenth century, it was only in Metz that Jews who openly professed their religion were able to originally settle in France. The protections afforded to them by the crown allowed the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine to become increasingly wealthy through the eighteenth century, which ultimately spurred continued resentments of the Jews by Christian populations.

The Continued Resistance and Expulsions of France's Jews

The jealousies and resentments towards the Jews of Metz that emerged in the eighteenth century were nothing uncommon or new. As long as there were Jews residing in France, conflict ensued. The resistance that first appeared in Bordeaux against the registration of the 1550 *lettres patentes* reappeared by the end of the century, when the Spanish laid siege to the city from 1596-1597. Fearful that the community of “Spanish and Portuguese merchants” would betray the city, the parlement of Bordeaux reacted, issuing a decree in January 1597 that moved those who had resided in Bordeaux for more than ten years from the city walls to the center of town. More recent inhabitants were expelled to Peyrehorade, Bidache, and Bayonne. According to traditional treatments of the Jews in southern France, this expulsion marked the differentiating point between the Jews of Bordeaux and the Jews of neighboring towns; however, the community in

¹²⁰ Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment and the Jews*, 131.

Bayonne did not become secondary to that of Bordeaux, but rather the Jews took their skills and economics with them as they moved to Bayonne, and began to prosper there as well.¹²¹ By the time the Jews deserted Bordeaux in 1597, the situation for the Sephardim had drastically changed in Bayonne. Previously banned from residing within the city walls, earlier Jews were forced to leave Bayonne each night before the sun had set, and could only return the next day for the sole purpose of business. They were instead permitted to settle in Bidache near the château of Antoine I de Gramont, the governor of Bayonne.¹²² Jews were finally allowed within the city walls in 1594, when the canon of St-Esprit authorized a new establishment of *portugais* – although they were still subject to tribute payments in order to live and continue their business.

The expulsion of the *marranos* and *portugais* to the southern border regions raised further tensions. Renewed concerns of treason against the French crown caused Henri IV to issue a new edict in 1602 that would have expelled the Jews from Bayonne. Although the act was never carried out, the initial expulsion of the Jews from Bordeaux marked, as Arthur Hertzberg argues, “the beginning of modern Jewish communal history in Bayonne and the surrounding villages,” as fears of the fulfillment of the act did inspire the flight of many *portugais* from Bordeaux.¹²³

Why, though, would the *marranos* and *portugais* have acted like spies for the Spanish given the legacy of their ancestors’ expulsions? Was tension caused by religious differences

¹²¹ Henry Léon, *Histoire des Juifs de Bayonne* (Marseille: Laffitte Reprints, 1976), 19.

¹²² *Ibid*, 20.

¹²³ Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment and the Jews*, 17; as Hertzberg states in his footnotes, he utilizes the account of the events given by Malvezin in *Histoire des Juifs à Bordeaux*. Léon, however, accounts for the January 1597 expulsion differently: it was not forced by external enemies, but rather requested by the community’s older Jewish inhabitants to defend their own commercial interests against newer arrivals.

really the cause of these problems? While it may be nearly impossible to answer these questions with complete resolution, a quick note here on the economic status of France during the Ancien Régime would ultimately help. There was nothing uniform about the French economy for most of the time in question: import dues and taxes varied from province to province, and special permissions were needed by the government to partake in economic activities. The older guild system existed, which meant these separate bodies still heavily regulated the production and trade of various goods. In short, even if it was not uniformly regulated, all economic activity in any given place still required some form of permission.¹²⁴ Any Jewish population moving into any town or city for trade would thus be infringing upon the economic rights and privileges of another group. Again, it is possible to see the potential here for a separate issue being masked by religious conflict: what easier way to eliminate your competition in a Catholic kingdom than to say it cannot coexist with you because they are a religious outsider.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Jews of southern France were already starting to be treated less as foreigners residing in the border provinces, and more as residents of the kingdom. By January 1604, the maréchal d'Ornano, the governor of Guyenne, was stating that the intention of the king for the Jews was to "be favorably received and dealt with as if they originated from the kingdom."¹²⁵ This treatment of Jews as "those who originated from the kingdom" under Henri IV, though, was quickly called into question upon his death, with the installation of his wife, Marie de Médicis, as queen regent. Her staunch Catholicism meant that instead of issuing *lettres patentes*, Marie would issue – in the name of her son, Louis XIII – an

¹²⁴ See Alberto Guenzi, "European Expansion in the Seventeenth Century" in *An Economic History of Europe*, ed. Antonio Di Vittorio (London: Routledge, 2006), 78-82.

¹²⁵ Nahon, *Juifs et judaïsme*, 46; « L'intention du roi étant qu'ils fussent reçus favorablement et traités comme les originaires du royaume. »

edict in 1615 to expel the Jews from France.¹²⁶ This politically called into question the notion of 1604 that the *portugais* were long-time inhabitants of France, but it still stuck firm. Yet the *portugais* and *marranos* had converted, and were able to avoid the expulsion because of their status as Christians.¹²⁷ Not only did the parlement of Bordeaux protect the *portugais* from this expulsion, it formally admitted the *portugais* into the merchant class: a decision on 23 August 1617 allowed naturalized foreigners to pay a sum of 300 *francs* to be recognized as bourgeois.¹²⁸

Little had changed by the end of the seventeenth century, and disputes between Jewish moneylenders and Christians continued well into the eighteenth century. By 1715, the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine had become embroiled in an economic dispute across several cities. Centered in the city of Strasbourg, Christian merchants attempted to reinforce the imperial decrees of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, permitting Jews only to pursue trades in old clothes, cattle, and moneylending. The Jews presented a formal petition to the crown in 1716, arguing that the extreme commercial limitations of the region's Jewish merchants would mean a considerable loss of tax revenue for the government. They offered to enter into the guilds of merchants and artisans, and to conduct business that would be subject to the controls of these strict regulating bodies. In return, the Jews requested the right of residence for women from outside of the province who married into their families, restrictions against foreign Jews attempting to come live in Alsace, and complete economic equality – which meant, most

¹²⁶ Ibid, 44; or as Nahon explains, “we have not found any *lettres patentes* from Louis XIII.” If *lettres* had been issued under Louis XIII they were either not preserved, or have yet to be uncovered.

¹²⁷ Philippe Bourdrel, *Histoire des juifs de France* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1974), 68

¹²⁸ Malvezin, *Histoire des Juifs à Bordeaux*, 123; Malvezin uses the term “bourgeois” in the more archaic meaning of “citizen” or “citizenship” while also applying it to mean merchant or someone from the middle class.

importantly, the right to keep shops publicly. Their request failed entirely when the old restrictions of Jews in Alsace and Lorraine were reaffirmed even to the extent of not permitting them to build or buy a house without royal permission.¹²⁹

By the eighteenth century, the monarchy was willing to extend certain rights to its Jewish population, but full equality in a Catholic kingdom could not be guaranteed. Economic advantages had allowed the Jews to persist in France, but the absolute state that the Jews petitioned to in the eighteenth century was much less willing to acquiesce than the fractured state of the sixteenth century. While the Jews had relied on the influence of the monarchy to protect the interests of both, the increasing number of interventions into the affairs of Jewish communities reflected the growth in the power of the state. Repeated conflicts with local powers were resolved by the renewal of *lettres patentes* and royal edicts eventually meant the Jews had almost altogether lost their ability to utilize their economic importance over the desires of the crown.

Another “Other” Among the Rest: the Avignonnais

While the Jews were a definite “other” among the French population, the Jews of the southeastern provinces, particularly those in Avignon, faced an altogether different experience from French Jews elsewhere. To start, although the city of Avignon was completely surrounded by France’s European border, it still remained outside of the French crown and was still under the control of the papacy as part of the Comtat Venaissin. “The Pope’s Jews,” as they were commonly referred to, managed to thrive under the rule of the Church, almost uninterrupted,

¹²⁹ Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment and the Jews*, 53.

from the twelfth century until the present day.¹³⁰ How was this possible, though, given that the Pope himself still directly ruled the region?

Avignon's early Jewish population had grown considerably by the sixteenth century, first after an expulsion of the Jews from France in 1306 – coincidentally only three years prior to the Papacy's move to Avignon, referred to as the "Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy" – and then again after their expulsion from the region of Provence in 1501. As Esther Benbassa highlights, they were absorbed into the Christian population: "Their affairs were adjudicated by Christian courts, and their contracts drawn up by Christian notaries."¹³¹ From the time of the Lateran Council of 1215, the Jews under Papal rule were required to be distinctly marked by a symbol, to distinguish themselves in public:

In some provinces a difference in dress distinguishes the Jews or Saracens from the Christians, but in certain others such a confusion has grown up that they cannot be distinguished by any difference. Thus it happens at times that through error Christians have relations with the women of Jews or Saracens, and Jews and Saracens with Christian women. Therefore, that they may not, under pretext of error of this sort, excuse themselves in the future for the excesses of such prohibited intercourse, we decree that such Jews and Saracens of both sexes in every Christian province and at all times shall be marked off in the eyes of the public from other peoples through the character of their dress. Particularly, since it may be read in the writings of Moses [Numbers 15:37-41], that this very law has been enjoined upon them....¹³²

Because the Jews of Avignon predominantly worked with commerce, their trades did not distinguish them from the rest of the population. The statutes of the city thus required all male

¹³⁰ Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 42.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² "The Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215" from *Medieval Sourcebook: Twelfth Ecumenical Council: Lateran IV 1215*, <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/basis/lateran4.asp>, canon 68.

Jews to wear the *roue*, a distinctive sign that was in the shape of a wheel.¹³³ The ability of Avignon's Jews to fall into place among the city's Christians allowed for relatively harmonious relations to occur between the two religions – at least in comparison to the state of affairs in France.

Pope Clement VII replaced the *roue* in 1524 with a yellow cap, a degrading symbol that would be worn by the Avignonnais until the Revolution. By the Renaissance period, the color yellow had become firmly established as the color of Judas Iscariot, taking on the associations of envy, jealousy, and duplicity. Even those accused of heresy and who refused to renounce their faith were compelled to come before the Spanish Inquisition dressed in a yellow cape.¹³⁴ Even so, the Jews retained their traditional privileges until 1555 with the issuance of the papal bull *Cum nimis absurdum*.¹³⁵ The bull renewed their obligation to wear the cap, forbade Jews from owning land outside of their reserved neighborhoods, and limited their professions to moneylending and the trade of used goods and clothing.

Benbassa notes that at any given time in its history, the entire Jewish population of the Papal States probably did not exceed 3,000.¹³⁶ An order of 1570 would have expelled the Jews from the region, and although it was never carried out, many Jews from Avignon and the Comtat did leave, and several small communities in the area disappeared as a direct result. Those who

¹³³ Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 42. The *roue* would evolve into the French *rouelle*, the distinctive yellow badge French Jews would be forced to wear during the Nazi occupation of France in the twentieth century. Referring to a broken wheel, the verb *rouer* would later be introduced to describe the punishment of being broken on the wheel.

¹³⁴ Eva Heller, *Psychologie de la couleur: effets et symboliques* (Paris: Éditions Pyramyd, 2000), 82.

¹³⁵ Jules Bauer, "Le chapeau jaune chez les Juifs comtadins," *Revue des études juives* 36 (1898), 53-64.

¹³⁶ Benbassa, *The Jews of France*, 43.

stayed were confined to the *carriero*, a street in the cities and major market towns that was eventually closed off at each end by a gate. By contrast, the “Jewish quarter” of Bordeaux was still defined by the medieval clusters of their homes, and the openness of these settlements made it much more difficult to locate Jews within the old city records, as Christians and Jews could live side by side.¹³⁷ This separation of Jews and Christians in territories controlled by the papacy was realized to an even further extent in 1624 when the Jews were relegated to four cities in the Comtat: Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon, and Isle-sur-la-Sorgue. The *carrieros* in the *arba’ kehillot*¹³⁸ were closed at night, and although the Jews still held the keys to the gates, they were guarded. The Jews were consigned to cramped quarters, often with several families to one house, and were forced to attend sermons meant to convince them of their error and to break from Judaism. Their holy books were either censored or seized, but they were nonetheless authorized to have a synagogue called the *Eschole française*.¹³⁹

By the eighteenth century, the Jews of Avignon and the Papal States began extending their commercial activities to other regions, as local commerce in the Papal States had been unable to support its Jewish population. Their presence in Bordeaux had become so noticeable by 1722 that local textile merchants requested a royal edict expelling them from the city. The decree was never carried out, but it did order a census to be taken, showing that 21 Avignonais families had made it to Bordeaux, almost all of them since 1700, and most were engaged in

¹³⁷ Nahon, *Juifs et judaïsme à Bordeaux*, 23.

¹³⁸ Ibid; from the Hebrew meaning “four holy communities,” usually in reference to Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias.

¹³⁹ Literally meaning the “French school,” this form of a synagogue served as both a place of worship and a center of learning for the Jews in Avignon.

brokerage or in the trade of old clothes.¹⁴⁰ The goal of these Avignonnais was clear: to obtain the legal right to reside in Bordeaux. To achieve these rights, the Avignonnais paid the royal treasury 4,000 *livres* in 1730 to share the rights granted to the *portugais* in the renewed *lettres patentes* of 1723 arguing that while the total was small it was proportionally larger per person than what the established Jewish community of Bordeaux had paid – the Jews of Bordeaux had paid a sum of 110,000 *livres*. Despite several decrees and attempted expulsions, the Avignonnais remained in the region, until, in 1759, a royal charter was granted to the six leading families of the Avignon Jews residing in Bordeaux. The charter, however, did little more than permit them the commercial rights to legally continue what they had been doing for years.¹⁴¹

Like the Jews of Alsace, the Avignonnais began buying and selling both saddle and draft horses. The “Pope’s Jews” also entered into the silk trade, offering competitive prices, and began lending money to clients in different legal standings, shifting from peasants or artisans to merchants, members of the clergy, and even members of the nobility. During this time, many petty dealers in used goods became bankers and merchants in Avignon. Unable to invest their profits in real estate or titles, these Jews held sizable reserves of liquid wealth, allowing them to fund the building of new synagogues in the *carrieros*.¹⁴²

Despite their new wealth, the Avignonnais were still confined to the *carriero* of the city, and their inferior status to Catholics was far from being removed. Forty-four articles published

¹⁴⁰ Isidore Singer and Cyrus Adler, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Vol. III (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1919), 319.

¹⁴¹ Szajkowski, *Franco-Judaica*, 24; document no. 266, *Lettres patentes du Roy en faveur des Juifs ou Nouveaux Chrétiens avignonois, établis à Bordeaux. Données à Versailles en mois de mai 1759. Régistrées en Parlement le quatorze juillet 1759*.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 44.

by the Holy Office in Rome in 1751 reinforced the bans upon the Jews in territories ruled by the Pope, and thirty years later, on the eve of the French Revolution, these articles were reissued with a new regulation: the closing of the gates to the *carriero* would be done jointly with a Catholic porter. Jews were no longer permitted to hold the keys to the quarter, amounting to nothing less than imprisoning them within the ghetto every night. The new regulations pushed more Jews from the *carrieros*, and by 1788 they had lost almost a quarter of their inhabitants.¹⁴³ In 1790, however, the Avignonnais joined their brethren as full-fledged citizens of France, as the city was absorbed into the new nation by the Revolutionary state.

The “Other” Jews of France

While extensive studies have been done on the Jewish communities of Bordeaux, Metz, and Avignon, it is important to note that these were only the largest of the populations in France up through the eighteenth century. Tracking how many Jews lived in a particular city during this time, let alone the entire kingdom, is a challenge. While city tax records provide the names of all head of households, historians must rely on tracking traditionally Jewish names to count them, and even still one can only estimate the totals. To describe the Jewish community by the mid-eighteenth century, Théophile Malvezin quotes the following passage in a letter from M. de Puddefer to Claude Boucher, the city’s intendant, on 7 February 1734: “There are 350 Portuguese and Avignonnais Jewish families in Bordeaux, forming a group of 4-5,000 souls; all of these families established themselves at different times; some passed from father to son in a time long ago, taking the old bourgeois quality of Bordeaux.”¹⁴⁴ While Malvezin notes that this number of families would really only equate to 1,400 to 1,500 people, the Jewish community by

¹⁴³ Robert Anchel, *Les Juifs de France* (Paris: J. B. Janin, 1946), 235.

¹⁴⁴ Malvezin, *Histoire des Juifs à Bordeaux*, 179.

the eighteenth century was very large – especially given that Gérard Nahon places the city’s total population at around 110,000 people by the end of the century, with “several thousand ‘new Christian’ Portuguese.”¹⁴⁵ As Behre-Miskimin highlights, the population of Metz had also grown extensively from the four original families that were permitted to settle in 1564: by 1624, there were just under 70 families; by 1669, about 119 households were located in the city; and by the end of the seventeenth century the number had reached 294.¹⁴⁶ David Bell estimates that of a total Messin population of 26,516 by 1717, about 1,900 were Jewish, and that on the eve of the Revolution, there were as many as “approximately 40,000 Jews...” across all of France.¹⁴⁷

While these economic centers made up the largest portions of the total French Jewish population, smaller communities did appear elsewhere during this time. As previously stated, the *portugais* and *marranos* who resettled in France during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also found their way to Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Tarbes, Marseille, and Montpellier, and after the initial expulsion from Bordeaux in 1597, the *marranos* settled in Peyrehorade, Bidache, and Bayonne. In Alsace and Lorraine, Jews could be found in Nancy, Strasbourg, the Bas-Rhin, and the large towns near economic centers, such as Bischheim, where Jewish merchants did most of their business.¹⁴⁸ Apart from Avignon, Marseille, and Montpellier, southwestern Jews could be found at Aix, Cavaillon, Carpentras, L’Isle-sur-Sorgue, Nîmes, and Toulouse. Jews were also found

¹⁴⁵ Nahon, *Juifs et judaïsme*, 61.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 51; Behre-Miskimin again cites the Archives Départementales de la Moselle in Metz, Subseries 17J *Archives du Consistoire Israélite de la Moselle*, 8.

¹⁴⁷ David Phillip Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 52.

¹⁴⁸ Ernest Kallmann, “Jewish Genealogy Research in France,” on JewishGen <http://www.jewishgen.org/french/kallmann.htm>.

sporadically across the north: in Normandy at Caen and in Champagne at Châlons-sur-Marne (now Châlons-en-Champagne); in Brittany at Clisson, Auceis, Segré, and, most importantly, at Nantes; and, despite earlier bans on their settlement in the area, in Paris. Jews had first made their way from Metz to Paris in the eighteenth century, establishing a small community there on the eve of Louis XIV's death: archival records show that in 1715, seventeen Jews resided within the city, and that by 1789, this had grown to about 500, establishing themselves in the Saint-Martin and Saint-Denis quarters, and on the rue Saint-André-des-Arts.¹⁴⁹

A surprising number of Jews also made their way to New France. The Jews had been especially prosperous on the island of Martinique, participating in agricultural roles that they were barred from in France, until their expulsion from the island in 1683. The intendant of Bordeaux was tasked with supervising and granting passports to those merchants traveling to the island colonies in America, many of which were freely given to the Jews of Bordeaux after the *lettres patentes* of 1723. Although the Jews were expelled from Louisiana in March 1724,¹⁵⁰ a few did exist on both the American continent in Canada and throughout the Caribbean until the 1760s.

Conclusions

The establishment of separate Jewish communities across the kingdom during a period of marked religious strife has created a treatment of their history that is disjointed by both distance and experience. By entering the kingdom under Christian pretenses, the Jews of Bordeaux were granted distinct privileges that could not be afforded to the Jews of Avignon, while the economic

¹⁴⁹ Léon Kahn, *Les Juifs de Paris au dix-huitième siècle* (Paris: 1894), 1.

¹⁵⁰ Abraham Cahen, "Les Juifs dans les Colonies Françaises au xviii^e siècle," *Revue des études juives* IV (1882), 127-145.

necessity in Alsace and Lorraine provided rights to Eastern Jews that were unavailable elsewhere. The distinct privileges afforded to each community by their individual *lettres patentes* has led to the separate treatment of these various communities, although their various shared experiences have made it possible to connect them across regional distances – in much the same way as collective histories have been compiled of the French kingdom, although the glaring cultural differences between northern and southern regions – which were disconnected not only by distance but even language – would suggest a different approach to their treatments as well.

Located along the border-regions, these separate communities may have developed at different rates, but they still encountered many of the same experiences. Both the Jews of Bordeaux and the Jews of Metz relied on royal intervention to protect them from the abuses of local elites. These requests for *lettres patentes*, not only guaranteed their rights and privileges, but also completely altered the relationship between the king, local officials, and the people. Their right to reside within France's borders hinged upon their ability to provide financial benefits to the state. The crown – unlike local elites – was willing to disregard certain illegal activities if it meant increased economic activity in a region.

Regardless of economic advantage, local jealousies and royal desires consistently dictated their treatment. No matter where Jews were found in France, and regardless of the issuance of *lettres patentes*, they often faced persecution. Although the Jews of Bordeaux had received their *lettres* in 1550, for example, they still faced expulsion in 1597. Their traditional economic pursuits of moneylending and trading used clothes or goods often placed them at the bottom of society, but their ability to persist enabled their community to grow and prosper, even during times of religious turmoil between Catholics and Huguenots.

Chapter 3

The Role of Jews in Early French Literature and Drama

While the existence of Jewish communities may have caused economic tensions across the lower levels of French society throughout the early modern period, their presence had, by the eighteenth century, spurred a renewed interest in Jews and Judaism among the nobility. Early French dramas were often religious in nature, featuring Jews in various capacities. The dramas of the sixteenth century had been influenced by the legacy of medieval *mystères*, taking their plots from ancient and biblical stories, while the rise of *salon* culture through the seventeenth century permitted the emergence of the Enlightenment movement. The discussion of ideas and the exchange of opinions altered France's philosophical environment, opening the way for new styles of writing and new representations of Jews. This chapter will explore French literature and drama from the sixteenth through eighteenth century, tracing the evolution in styles and themes from neo-classical¹⁵¹ tragedy into the writing of the *philosophes*. This study will also offer close readings of several prominent French playwrights and authors who feature Jewish characters, highlighting how these roles were represented in an attempt to build contemporary perceptions of the Jews.

¹⁵¹ Following in J. S. Street's usage: "To avoid confusion, Classical with a capital C is used to designate the style used by Corneille, Molière, Racine and contemporaries; with a small c classical applies to the whole tradition stretching back to ancient Greece and Rome; and neo-classical refers to the version of that tradition current in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of which the Classical style is one variant." From notes in *French Sacred Drama From Bèze to Corneille: Dramatic Forms and Their Purposes in the Early Modern Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 298.

The Impact of Religion on Dramas: From *Mystère* to Humanism

French authors and playwrights during the sixteenth century inherited their themes from the legacies of medieval prose. Writers such as Pierre Corneille, Robert Garnier, and Michel de Montaigne were influenced by the *mystères*, medieval plays that usually followed Christian stories. The *mystères* had grown to gigantic proportions, and staging them required time, energy, and money on massive scales. They often required casts of more than 100 people, while construction of the stage followed by rehearsals could take months and would occasionally occupy an entire community. Resources were never easily available, and they would become scarcer still during times of war.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, the *mystères* had taken on a mixing of comic relief that permitted audiences to laugh at religious stories that were traditionally treated as rigid and serious. Devout Catholics were scandalized by the humor being applied to the Bible in the face of growing Protestant tensions and pushed for the state to react. An *arrêt* of 17 November 1548 by the Parlement of Paris prohibited all performances of sacred *mystères* within the capital and its suburbs, but outside of the city these plays continued to flourish.¹⁵² By this time, however, the scale of the *mystères* had also begun to subside, and only short excerpts from the great compilations were ever staged.

These plays first emerged from the liturgy under the guidance of churchmen whose purpose was to further inform people about the story of the Resurrection and to strengthen their understanding of religious services.¹⁵³ The *mystères* were meant to illuminate Christian

¹⁵² Louis Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du théâtre en France. Les mystères* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1880), 428-429.

¹⁵³ Grace Frank, *The Medieval French Drama*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 22.

understanding of the conditions and purpose of human life, introducing God as a vital character to explain how human history has been directed by His will. After 1550, these plays shifted toward a focus on the careers of individual men (i.e. the saints), which excluded attempts to set out God's plan for mankind, and God appeared simply to explain how He was directing events.¹⁵⁴

Influenced by these *mystères*, Théodore de Bèze was the first playwright working in French to attempt a new approach to these religious topics. In his *Abraham Sacrifiant* [Sacrificing Abraham], Bèze concentrated on the crisis that Abraham was faced with when ordered to sacrifice Isaac, rather than the events of sacred history. By combining classical and medieval techniques to make his religious meanings clear, Bèze also departed from existing French literary traditions with his attempt to emotionally connect spectators with the protagonist.¹⁵⁵

Early Latin sacred dramas began to appear in French by the late sixteenth century, influencing the development of the French sacred drama. Although it was not printed in Paris until 1554, manuscripts of George Buchanan's *Jephtes sive votum* [Jephthah, a Vow] had already circulated and were probably available to Bèze before he wrote *Abraham Sacrifiant*. A French translation of the Latin text first appeared in Paris in 1566, and its popularity was attributable in part to its connection with the Wars of Religion. The Prologue is delivered by an angel, who establishes the theme: in prosperity, the Jews have forgotten they owe their happiness to God, and not the false idols they worship; He will punish their ingratitude with war, famine, and plague, but before the Jews' afflictions can cause them despair, He sends a champion – an

¹⁵⁴ Street, *French sacred drama*, 8.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 21.

outcast bastard, Jephté – so that they should realize they owe victory to God. Jephté praises God’s justice in punishing the Jews for their sins, and renews his vow to Him with the sacrifice of Iphis, his daughter. He laments his misfortune, but does not rebel. From his anguish, Iphis appreciates that he will not be killing her frivolously and accepts her fate. The play is meant to strengthen religious convictions, because whatever his anguish, Jephté remains God’s dutiful servant.¹⁵⁶

During the French Wars of Religion, playwrights were preoccupied above all else with the kingdom’s agony; reflection on the kingdom’s suffering and its origins in sinfulness remained an inspiration until the memory of war and strife began to fade. These pious dramatists sought an explanation for the horrors they depicted in God’s justice, adopting dramatic styles that allowed them to propose a connection between providence and suffering.¹⁵⁷ They utilized the comments of a chorus and frequently caused the principal characters to reflect objectively upon their own actions – all for the benefit of the audience. The essence of the humanist dramatic style was thus the exemplary conception of action and character.

Humanist playwrights such as André de Rivaudeau wholeheartedly adopted an adherence to the older Greek and Roman forms of tragedies that utilized choruses and the iambic trimeter¹⁵⁸ to give a unique flow to the lines. In his *Aman, tragédie sainte* [Haman, Holy Tragedy], Rivaudeau utilized biblical characters from the Book of Esther. The character of Mardochée (the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 23.

¹⁵⁷ André de Rivaudeau, *Les Œuvres poétiques d'André de Rivaudeau* (Paris: August Aubry, 1859), <https://archive.org/details/lesoeuvrespotiq01rivagoog>, 88.

¹⁵⁸ An “iambic trimeter” consists of three iambic units per line, stemming from the Iambus genre in Ancient Greece that referred to any informal kind of poetry that was intended to entertain. See John Williams White, “Iambic Verse,” *The Verse of Greek Comedy* (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1912), 22-71.

biblical Mordecai) recalls the whole of Jewish history within the opening monologue of the play, and describes the afflictions the Jewish nation has brought upon itself by its sins and neglect of God. The reward for submitting patiently to His correction is eternal life, and the Jews must accept death if God wills it. The moral of the plot is not lost: the whole play is a recommendation for humble submission to God. His characters serve as examples of pride and humility, and their roles show the rewards these qualities receive.¹⁵⁹

Humanist writers such as Robert Garnier, whose work, *Les Juifves* [The Jews],¹⁶⁰ will be analyzed below, were more concerned with theme rather than with plot. As J. S. Street argues, “logic of plot and character was not a preoccupation of the humanist dramatists.... *Les Juifves* is tightly bound together, however, by a logic of theme, and it is only by reference to the theme that the structure of the play makes sense. The humanist playwright required the spectator to reflect on the material presented and to apply the lessons learned....”¹⁶¹ It is only by this process of reflection that the relevance of the scenes to each other would become clear.

Robert Garnier’s *Les Juifves*

Robert Garnier’s tragedy *Les Juifves*, written in 1583, has long been considered one of the greatest works of the sixteenth century.¹⁶² Following in the path of his contemporaries,

¹⁵⁹ Street, *French sacred drama*, 65.

¹⁶⁰ I have used *Œuvres Complètes de Robert Garnier: Les Juifves, Bradamante, Poésies Diverses* ed. Raymond Lebègue (Paris: Société des Belles Lettres, 1949). The modern feminine plural of *juif* is *juives*, while the older spelling retained both the ‘f’ and ‘v’. I will utilize the older spelling when referring to Garnier’s work.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 88.

¹⁶² James H. Dahlinger, review of Robert Garnier, “Les Juifves: Tragédie” ed. Sabine Lardon in *Sixteenth Century Journal* XXXVII (2006), 173.

Garnier's play focuses around the biblical story of the Chaldean King Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁶³ While Nebuchadnezzar had been utilized in the older *mystères*, he was mainly used to depict the better-known tales of Daniel or of the Three Holy Children, and the story of the king was rather unpopular. It seems that the choice of Nebuchadnezzar, then, would make little sense, but given the path that his contemporaries were following, it is clear why Garnier felt the attraction to it.

Since the decline of the *mystères*, French authors had shifted away from using the stories of the New Testament as inspiration for both religious and intellectual reasons. As Clive Frankish argues, "Calvinists attacked the portrayal of Christ on the stage; for the humanists the mystery plays smacked of the Gothick.... The God of the Old Testament is a God who above all is seen working through history. In the midst of the Religious Wars this was an idea which appealed to Protestants and Roman Catholics alike."¹⁶⁴ In this way, Garnier was also using his work as a message to the French people as a whole. His dedication to Anne de Joyeuse¹⁶⁵ states that his work represents the "calamities of a people who have abandoned their God, as have we. It is a palatable subject, and one of saintly guidance."¹⁶⁶ There is no Calvinist insistence within

¹⁶³ Refer to the "Note on Translation and Spelling" at the start; I will use the English spelling of Nebuchadnezzar in referral to the biblical story, but will utilize Nabuchodonosor when referring to the character in Garnier's work. All characters will retain the spelling given to them in the play.

¹⁶⁴ Clive R. Frankish, "The Theme of Idolatry in Garnier's 'Les Juifves'" in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 30 (1968), 67.

¹⁶⁵ As the duc de Joyeuse, Anne was a royal favorite of Henri III, and, as an admiral, an active participant in the French Wars of Religion. See the dissertation by Jeannette Parritt Newman, "The House of Joyeuse: Its Part in the French Religious Wars, 1585-1596" (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 1927), for more information on the family.

¹⁶⁶ Robert Garnier, *Œuvres Complètes de Robert Garnier: Les Juifves, Bradamante, Poésies Diverses* ed. Raymond Lebègue (Paris: Société des Belles Lettres, 1949), 10; « Or vous ay-je icy représenté les souspirables calamitez d'un peuple, qui a comme nous abandonné son Dieu. C'est un sujet delectable, et de bonne et sainte edification. »

the plot, but it rather serves as a means of highlighting the parallels between the story of Zedekiah and the Wars of Religion.

Garnier's understanding of the significance of the Old Testament is evident through his themes. He recognizes that it is the account of God working through history on the basis of a covenant between Jehovah and his chosen people. The story of *Les Juifves* is the account of what happens when one party in this covenant breaks the pact through sin. In the case of the Jews, this sin was idolatry, and Act I sets this out through the use of the Prophete and the Chœur des Juifs, or Jewish Chorus. The wrath of God is apparent at the very opening, with the use of the Prophete's speech:

For how long, Lord, wilt thou spread thine ire?
For how long wilt thou want to destroy thy beloved people?
The unfortunate Judah, whom thou hast cherished,
Whom thou hast nourished through the deserts for forty years,
5 Like a tender-aged child still nursing,
And already treated by the rigor of thine hand?
Oh Lord our God, soften thy wrath,
Calm thine eye, thou must be pitiful and sweet,
10 We have offended thee with our execrable crimes
And know how much we deserve to be punished:
But alas ! forgive us, we ask for your mercy,
Although we have sinned, we also repent.¹⁶⁷

The Prophete continues with the sin of the Jews, explicitly proclaiming the Jews' worship of "the false God" as abominable.¹⁶⁸ Frankish argues, however, that the most important lines for Garnier's theme of idolatry come toward the end of the Prophete's speech. The Jew's Idols

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, ll. 1-13; « Jusques à quand, Seigneur, épandras-tu ton ire ? / Jusqu'à quand voudras-tu ton peuple aimé détruire / L'infortuné Juda, que tu as tant chéri, / Que tu as quarante ans par les deserts nourri, / Comme un enfant tendret que sa nourrice allaite, / Et ores en rigueur ta dure main le traite ? / O seigneur nostre Dieu, ramolli ton courroux, / Rasserene ton œil, sois pitoyable et doux, / Nous t'avons offense de crimes execrables / Et connoissons combien nous sommes punissables: / Mais las ! pardonne nous, nous te crions merci, / Si nous avons peché, nous repentons aussi. »

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, ll.70-75.

“resemble that God who [they] are going to follow, instead of the Lord Eternal, our living God, who made Heaven and Earth, and whose jealousy does not endure a man bowing before His creature.”¹⁶⁹ Jealousy, or *jaloux*, becomes the key word in Frankish’s argument, because it not only appears again in the section of the play on the episode of the Golden Calf, but it is part of the Old Testament vocabulary. Given that the word appears in Exodus, where the Ten Commandments and idolatry are dealt with, Garnier connects back to the Bible and to the very threat contained in the verse where the “zealots” appear.¹⁷⁰

Garnier’s Nabuchodonosor serves as God’s punisher for the Jews. Frankish argues, however, that “Nabuchodonosor would not have been dramatically adequate, had he merely been introduced as the instrument of God’s punishment of the Jews,” and he thus represents a reinforcement of their idolatry.¹⁷¹ While the Jews worship their false idols, Nabuchodonosor’s idolatry is vanity; his arrogant pride allows Nabuchodonosor to compare himself with the Jehovah of the Old Testament,¹⁷² while his taunting provokes Sédécie (the biblical Zedekiah), the last King of Judah, to make a profession of his faith:

The God that we serve is the only God of this world,
Who built the sky, the Earth and the waves from nothing:
It is He alone who commands wars and onslaughts:
There is no God but Him, all others are false.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, ll. 83-86; « Semblables soyent ceux-la qui tels Dieux vivant, / Au lieu de l’Eternel, de nostre Dieu vivant, / Qui a fait ciel et terre, et qui jaloux n’endure / Un homme s’incliner devant sa creature. »

¹⁷⁰ Frankish, “The Theme of Idolatry,” 70.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 77.

¹⁷² Garnier, *Les Juives*, ll. 193-194.

¹⁷³ Ibid, ll. 1391-1394; « Le Dieu que nous servons est le seul Dieu du monde, / Qui de rien a basti le ciel, la terre et l’onde : / C’est luy seul qui commande à la guerre, aux assaus : / Il n’y a Dieu que luy, tous les autres sont faux. »

Frankish ignores this speech, moving past this act to the farewell scene between Nabuchodonosor's wife, Amital (Amytis), and her children, but the confession of the Sédécie should not be overlooked. While Frankish also describes this speech as “an affirmation of the One True God, in opposition to the many false ones,” this is not an admittance of worshipping a Christian God.¹⁷⁴ Garnier's Jews still retained their faith and continued to worship their “false idols.”

Although Frankish argues for the importance of idolatry as a main theme throughout *Les Juifves*, he unconsciously points to Garnier's style of writing: “On the whole [Garnier] avoids issues on which there was disagreement between Roman Catholics and Protestants.... Having chosen the story of Zedekiah, he naturally makes idolatry a central theme, but ... what really interested him was the total picture of calamity which ‘turning aside from the way’ presented.”¹⁷⁵ Humanist writers such as Garnier were not solely concerned with theme, but rather focused on themes that played off of action and characterization. The story of Nebuchadnezzar afforded Garnier the opportunity to fully develop his own portrayal of the Jews – they were idolaters, but also steadfast in their beliefs. Although Garnier's Jews could have easily been superimposed over the Huguenots – who, entrenched in battle with the Catholics, did not lose their faith – their characterization allowed the onlooker to take themes addressed in *Les Juifves* and apply them to their understanding of the Wars of Religion. To Garnier, the biblical Jews became a gateway in which “the other” in France could be digested and recognized as a legitimate part of French society.

¹⁷⁴ Frankish, “The Theme of Idolatry,” 81.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 83.

From Humanism to the Classical

While the humanist plays had replaced the popularity of sacred dramas during the Wars of Religion, a renewed interest in religion saw the recovery of sacred chronicles during the seventeenth century. These new plays contained the features of a chronicle, but focused on the lives of saints instead of biblical stories. Sacred chronicles followed the humanist tract by containing little indication as to why the story was important to the audience, and tended to not address the spectators' sympathetic emotions.¹⁷⁶

This new style did not differ greatly in terms of the style developed by humanists, but it differed completely in both content and its intended effect. Where the humanists had subordinated everything in their quest to illustrate their theme, the Classicists – including Corneille, Molière, and Racine – felt compelled to present a realistic account of the world.¹⁷⁷ The basis of realism relied on characters that were presented as people with whom the spectator could sympathize. Ideally the playwright, stage-designer, and actor would converge to create the illusion of real action on the stage, involving real people in a seemingly real location. Whereas a humanist play required the spectator to stand back and judge the action, neo-classical works were arranged so that the observer had to become emotionally involved if he or she were to benefit from the experience. Street argues that when the Classical dramatic technique was applied to sacred subjects, “the playwrights were able at once to satisfy the taste for a strong emotional impact produced by sympathetic characterization, and a tense and complex plot...”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Street, *French sacred drama*, 149.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 162.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 175.

As the seventeenth century progressed, these saint-plays evolved to rely heavily on secular elements. Playwrights such as Pierre du Ryer created complex and tense court dramas that involved the twisting of secular topics with biblical and saintly themes. In his work *Esther, tragédie* [Esther, Tragedy], du Ryer's rewriting of history allowed for vigorous personalities to come into contact with one another, producing tense conflicts born from a struggle to outwit one another. The action of *Esther* occurs on the day set for Esther's coronation. According to the biblical tale, Vashti had been dismissed from court before Haman had yet to appear; however, unwilling to deny his plot the conflict between these characters, du Ryer places Esther, Vashti, and Haman together. The first three acts of the play even set Vashti, Haman, and Mardochée in cooperation in an attempt to thwart Esther's elevation to power, but their wrath, pride, and vindictiveness are defeated by Esther's calm humility. Du Ryer's Esther outwits Haman's attempt to have the Jews slaughtered, and only after the plot is foiled does she reveal her own Jewish faith.¹⁷⁹ Although du Ryer derived his court material from the Bible, he did not treat it in a religious manner and the play's only religious action is the transformation that overtakes Esther in the first act. God removes her timidity to enable her to take the throne, but du Ryer also leaves the possibility of a secular explanation by suggesting that she has taken Mardochée's reasoning to heart.¹⁸⁰ Where the humanists had introduced debates for their own sake with little regard for their relevance, du Ryer created personal clashes to further his plot. It may have lacked the coherence of a Racinian tragedy, but du Ryer's *Esther* was still one of the most vivid productions of its time.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 187.

¹⁸⁰ Pierre du Ryer, *Esther, tragédie* (Paris: Antonine de Sommaville & Augustin Courbé, 1644), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k71601n>, 12.

While du Ryer's tragedy may not have complemented Racine stylistically, their choice of topic aligned perfectly. Unlike the other notable Classic dramatists of Pierre Corneille and Molière, Jean Racine did write about Jews. While Molière's *Tartuffe, ou l'Imposteur* [Tartuffe, or the Imposter] is seen as a religious critique, the play does not feature Jewish characters. It is also worth noting that while he did not dedicate an entire work to the Jews, Molière does use the word *juif*, if only in passing, in Act II scene 1 of *L'Avare* [The Miser], during a conversation between Cléante and La Flèche. While the two discuss moneylending, Cléante finds the practices of one particular lender to be especially despicable, exclaiming "What on Earth is that Jew, that Arab?"¹⁸¹ Choosing Esther as his subject, Racine wrote *Esther: tragédie, tirée de l'écriture sainte* [Esther: Tragedy, Drawn From Scripture], at the demand of Madame de Maintenon, in 1689. While *Esther* is seen as one of the most successful of the Old Testament dramas of the seventeenth century, it has long lived in the shadow of Racine's final work, *Athalie*, written just two years later in 1691.

Jean Racine's *Esther: tragédie, tirée de l'écriture sainte*

When the pupils of the Maison royale de Saint-Louis first performed Jean Racine's biblical tragedy *Esther* in 1689, they did so before the king and court at Saint-Cyr. In his preface, Racine explains his choice of Esther because it "appears full of the larger lessons of God's love, and of the detachment of everyone from amidst the world itself."¹⁸² The complexities of Esther come forth in Racine's treatment of the story, as she can be seen as a heroine of both the Jewish "Esther" and the Christian "Book of Esther." She is claimed by both religious traditions in a

¹⁸¹ Molière, *Œuvres Complètes* ed. Pierre-Aimé Touchard (Paris: l'Intégrale, 1963), 439; « Comment diable ! quel Juif, quel Arabe est-ce là ? »

¹⁸² Jean Racine, *Œuvres Complètes* ed. Pierre Clarac (Paris: l'Intégrale, 1962), 266.

unique story of biblical anti-Jewishness, although she herself is Jewish. For French spectators, Esther's status doubled: as a Jew, she is a literal "other," even though she has also traditionally been assimilated to the "same" as a Christian heroine.¹⁸³

Racine opens Act I in Esther's apartment, with her speaking to her confidant, Élise. The two repeatedly make reference to Esther's Jewish faith:

25 O spectacle ! O admirable triumph to mine eyes,
Worthy indeed of the arm that has saved our fathers!
The proud Assuérus crowns his captive,
The powerful Persian is at the feet of a Jew!
And by what secret impulses, by what sequences,
30 Has Heaven accomplished such a great event?¹⁸⁴

Esther and Élise make numerous references to Esther's religion, repeatedly reminding the audience that it is a secret kept hidden from those beyond the walls of the apartment. As Allen Wood highlights in his article "Racine's 'Esther' and the Biblical/Modern Jew," this obsession "may be due to guilt or fear on her part, or a repeated reminder that she is a hidden Jew, a concept which might resonate in a seventeenth-century nation well aware of Marranos and other crypto-Jews."¹⁸⁵ Although Esther is simply and silently a societal "other," it seems wholly plausible that Racine is alluding to this community of *marranos*, as the issue of forced conversion arises in Act II. In a conversation between Élise and the choir during scene 9, an unnamed character ("une autre Israélite") questions what would happen if King Assuérus forced them to kneel before a false idol. Another member of the choir ("la jeune Israélite") responds

¹⁸³ Allen Wood, "Racine's 'Esther' and the Biblical/Modern Jew" in *Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature* XXXVI 70 (2009), 210.

¹⁸⁴ Racine, *Œuvres*, 267, ll. 25-30; « O spectacle ! ô triomphe admirable à mes yeux, / Digne en effet du bras qui sauva nos aïeux / Le fier Assuérus couronne sa captive, / Et le persan superbe est aux pieds d'une Juive! / Par quels secrets ressorts, par quel enchaînement / Le ciel a-t-il conduit ce grand événement? »

¹⁸⁵ Wood, "Racine's 'Esther'," 212.

indirectly and sarcastically: “Me, I could betray the God that I love! / I would love a god without force and without virtue, / The remains of a trunk felled by the winds, / Who cannot even save himself!”¹⁸⁶ The choir continues to claim that those who believe in false gods must be destroyed – a long way off from the Jews of Garnier’s *Les Juifves*, who openly and proudly worshipped false idols.

Unlike Esther, Mardochée is openly recognized as a Jew and is unwavering in his devotion to his God. He is seen by Aman, the king’s favorite, as both proud and arrogant. Aman demands complete obedience from every subject and sees Mardochée as “seditious” because “he does not deign to even lower his eyes.”¹⁸⁷ Mardochée refuses to bow before the secular authority of Aman, just as the choir refuses to bow before a false idol. Wood argues that, “this passage may recall the defiance of seventeenth-century Jews to French political or religious orthodoxy.”¹⁸⁸ As previously discussed, however, the Jews of France during this time were not only accepting of royal authority, but also relied on it to flourish and the Jews of Metz in particular depended upon the French crown to protect their rights and privileges from local authorities. Wood does little to back up this claim, and instead moves on to the topic of forced conversions, which probably did not occur anywhere in France. Even the Jews of the Comtat Venaissin, who lived under the direct authority of the Pope, were never subject to forced conversion and were only required to attend weekly mass (even if the intention of the mass was

¹⁸⁶ Racine, *Œuvres*, 275, ll. 764-766; « Moi, je pourrais trahir le Dieu que j'aime ! / J'adorerais un dieu sans force et sans vertu, / Reste d'un tronc par les vents abattu, / Qui ne peut se sauver lui-même! »

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 272, ll. 429-432; « Lui, fièrement assis, et la tête immobile ! / Traite tous ces honneurs d'impiété servile / Présente à mes regards un front séditieux / Et ne daignerait pas au moins baisser les yeux ».

¹⁸⁸ Wood, “Racine’s ‘Esther’,” 213.

to permit the Jews to see the “error of their ways,” they were not forced to convert through them).

Racine’s *Esther* is littered with anti-Semitic references and other gleanings onto French views on Jewish life, practices, and crimes, which takes a step away from focusing solely on the Jews of the Bible, and works contemporary Jews into the plot. While the biblical story contains a king who is both indifferent and removed, Mardochée recognizes that Assuérus has been prejudiced by Aman’s lies:

To the bloodthirsty Aman we are all delivered;
The swords and knives are already prepared;
The whole nation as one is proscribed.
170 Aman, the impious Aman of the Amalécite race,
Has, for this fatal blow, used all his credit;
And the king, too gullible, signed the order.¹⁸⁹

Wood traces the anti-Semitic sentiments through Racine’s work: Hydaspes, a palace officer, later calls Mardochée “the head of that abominable, godless nation;”¹⁹⁰ as Esther is about to reveal her Jewish faith to Assuérus, the king reveals his plans to destroy Mardochée and all his people, that he “will lose at least those heinous people”;¹⁹¹ and again when Aman relates his displeasure of having to lead Mardochée through the streets, calling him “a miserable Jew, the shame of humans.”¹⁹² According to Wood, this anti-Semitism comes not from the Bible but from

¹⁸⁹ Racine, *Œuvres*, 269, ll. 167-172; « Au sanguinaire Aman nous sommes tous livrés ; / Les glaives, les couteaux, sont déjà préparés ; / Toute la nation à la fois est proscrire. / Aman, l’impie Aman, race d’Amalécite, / A, pour ce coup funeste, armé tout son crédit ; / Et le roi, trop crédule, a signé cet édit. »

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 271, l. 421; it is important to note that when Hydaspes calls Mardochée « ce chef d’une race abominable, impie », he is using *race* to mean people, or nation, not specifically “race.”

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 274, l. 630.

¹⁹² Ibid, 276, l. 846.

contemporary perceptions of the Jews, particularly in reference to Esther being an “impure source.”¹⁹³ Wood suggests that this “is both a comment on the biology of racial purity as well as a suggestion of a ‘poisoned well,’”¹⁹⁴ but the idea of racial purism was typically only used as a justification for the Spanish Inquisition, and not in terms of an entire race but only in the sense of a man’s ancestry.¹⁹⁵ Arguments for the biological or racial impurity that Wood refers to would not appear until later in the nineteenth century. Moreover, this concept of an impure or poisoned source only appears twice within *Esther*, and if this were a hint to racial anti-Semitism the references would have been stronger and more frequent. Instead, the anti-Semitism that comes through in *Esther* can be found in the ideas of the Jews having usurious practices, in the lies that Mardochee tells the king, and in the references to Jews being “the stigma of humans.”¹⁹⁶

Along with references of contemporary Jewish sentiments, Racine refers to God and the issue of deicide – one of the most severe accusations against the Jews. In the Bible, the conflict between Mordecai and Haman plays out before King Ahasuerus, and each man symbolically represents a separate people, and a different theology. While both the Christian and Jewish texts hardly mention God, Racine’s text allows the divine to manifest. God is not hidden in the songs of the choir, and the conflict between the separate characters plays out like a clash of the gods. Esther states that the God of Israel can defeat “all those gods that never were.”¹⁹⁷ Esther later

¹⁹³ Ibid, 278, 1039.

¹⁹⁴ Wood, “Racine’s ‘Esther’,” 214.

¹⁹⁵ See Francois Soyer, *Popularizing Anti-Semitism in Early Modern Spain and its Empire: Francisco de Torrejoncillo and the Centinela contra Judios (1674)* (Boston: Brill, 2014).

¹⁹⁶ Racine, *Œuvres*, 276, l. 846.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 270, l. 272; « Et confonds tous ces dieux qui ne furent jamais. »

refers to her God as the avenger of the innocent, and although God may have punished the Jews by exiling them from Jerusalem, He is ultimately merciful since Esther is successful in saving them. If Aman and his gods were successful in annihilating the Jews, Esther's God would have been destroyed: "and today they want the same mortal blow, / Abolish thy name, thy people, and thine altar. / Therefore an unfaithful man, after so many miracles, / could wipe out the faith of your oracles."¹⁹⁸ The role of deicide is flipped from a crime of the Jews to the thought-out plans of someone bent on destroying the Jews. While Racine flips the traditional role of deicide from the Jews to Aman, he also symbolically casts Aman in terms traditionally reserved for a Jew. Aman "is a stranger, despised by all, despicable in his actions, and whose violent death is intended as a righteous, fitting end for anybody who would refuse the true God and seek to harm the Chosen people."¹⁹⁹

The Impact of Religion on French Literature

While sacred dramas could be used to easily portray biblical stories to the masses, a considerable amount of literature was still produced during this period in France. The early sixteenth century saw the height of the French Renaissance and literature dominated by short stories influenced by the Italian *novellas*. The attraction to dialogued short stories stemmed from the ease in which they could be performed: instead of the large productions required for plays, someone could simply read a short story out loud to a non-literate public, making these works accessible to even larger audiences. Literacy ultimately limited the scope in which French literature could affect the public, but the social stratum of France also influenced the style of

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 269, ll. 263-266; « Et veulent aujourd'hui qu'un même coup mortel / Abolisse ton nom ton peuple et ton autel. / Ainsi donc un perfide, après tant de miracles, / Pourrait anéantir la foi de tes oracles. »

¹⁹⁹ Wood, "Racine's 'Esther'," 216.

writing. For the first half of the sixteenth century, the French novel was still dominated by medieval chivalric tales. Meanwhile, authors such as François Rabelais began to blend the humanism that was prevalent in drama with medieval farce to create extravagant works that served as keen satires of religious hypocrisy, political injustice, and human doubt. They were not wholly based on the stories of the Bible and therefore mentioned Jews less frequently than their counterparts in theatre. Jews do, however, appear in the works of Michel de Montaigne, arguably considered one of the most influential writers of his era. His work *Essais*,²⁰⁰ which was first published in 1580 but not completed until 1592, portrays man – and especially himself – with frankness and honesty. He finds the most basic features of human nature to be its great variety and volatility, describing his own poor memory, his disdain for the pursuit of lasting fame, and his attempt to detach himself from worldly things. Most importantly, he writes about his disgust with the religious conflicts of his time.

The Complete Works of Michel de Montaigne

The complexity of Montaigne's *Les Essais* rests in the breadth of his topics and the style of his writing. Each separate essay evolved between each successive publishing. Additions were made between 1580 and the publishing in 1588, and upon his death in 1592, a third printing was prepared after a manuscript with markings in his own hand was found at his family home. His knowledge of the ancient classics is apparent, as he directly quotes them regularly.

Mentions of the Jews are sporadic, and they are included in his writings for various reasons. The first appearance of the Jews is in book 1, chapter 14, titled *Que le goust des biens et des maux dépend en bonne partie de l'opinion que nous en avons*, or “That the taste of good and

²⁰⁰ *Les Essais* has traditionally been translated into English as “Essays,” although the French – meaning “trial” or “attempt” – is more fitting, as they are an attempt to explore his thoughts, life, and learning through writing.

bad depends in large part on the opinion that we have of things.” Montaigne opens the chapter with a Greek maxim, that “Men... are tormented by the opinion they have of things, not by the things themselves.”²⁰¹ He argues that a great gain would be made for humankind if this could be proven true in every case. While the philosophy behind the chapter is very deep, it is of no surprise to find mention of the Jews within a chapter dealing with what is good and what is evil. His argument, simply put, is that what man has found to be evil is only made evil by the opinions of those who believe it not to be good:

If the original essence of the things we fear had the ability to lodge itself within us of its own authority, it would do so equally in us all: because all men are of the same sort, and find themselves furnished, though some more than less, with the useful tools and instruments to plan and judge. But the diversity of opinions that we have of these things clearly shows that they do come into us under this composition: in the beginning one man may lodge [these opinions] in himself in their essence, but one thousand others give it a new and contrary essence.”²⁰²

This idea follows closely with opinions of Jews, and how anti-Semitism had emerged in Europe. The various experiences people have had while encountering Jews have shaped their own opinions, but their views then shape those of the people around them. Anti-Semitism is born in man based on the ideals of others, and while you have your own ability to place judgment it is almost always easier to believe the “one thousand others” who think differently.

²⁰¹ Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Les Essais* (Paris: Hachette, 1912), <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:2:14.montaigne.134027>, 50.

²⁰² Ibid, 51; « Si l'estre originel de ces choses que nous craignons, avoit credit de se loger en nous de son autorité, il logeroit pareil et semblable en tous: car les hommes sont tous d'une espece, et sauf le plus et le moins, se trouvent garnis de pareils outils et instruments pour concevoir et juger. Mais la diversité des opinions que nous avons de ces choses là montre clerement qu'elles n'entrent en nous que par composition: tel à l'aventure les loge chez soy en leur vray estre, mais mille autres leur donnent un estre nouveau et contraire chez eux. »

According to Montaigne, our principal adversaries are death, poverty, and pain, and our fear of death changes the way we react. He applies this same thought to war and religion, stating that all religions are capable of committing violence – even Catholics. Here he introduces the Jews being cast out from Spain and Portugal: beginning with the banishment from Castile, the Jews of Spain travelled to Portugal from which they too were eventually banished, and sent to settle in North Africa. The Jews were loaded onto ships and sent away as slaves. They were treated inhumanely and either forced into slavery or to convert. When Manuel came to the throne in Portugal, he first had them freed, but then changed his opinion – believing them now to be evil – and gave them time to leave his country. The Jews were once again forced to flee or convert to Christianity to remain in their homeland.²⁰³ Montaigne recognizes the inhumanity of Spain and Portugal’s treatment of the Jews, and notes the scarring legacy it has left: “of their faith, or of their descendants, still even today – one hundred years later – few *portugais* are certain, although custom and length of time are stronger guides than any other force.”²⁰⁴ While this anecdote about the Jews of Spain and Portugal was not part of the original publication and was only added to the 1592 manuscript, it speaks to his understanding of the *marrano* and *portugais* communities of Bordeaux. As discussed in the previous chapter, the end of the sixteenth century saw increased tensions between the Christian and Jewish populations of Bordeaux, leading many to question the sincerity and devotion of practicing “new Christians.” It is astonishing for Montaigne to draw upon this and argue in his essay that while the *portugais* may not be fully certain of their Jewish faith, their customs tell everyone else the truth. While it seems to be a fleeting passage in an

²⁰³ Ibid, 53.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 54; « ...de la foi desquels, ou de leur race, encores aujourd'huy cent ans apres peu de Portugois s'asseurent, quoy que la coustume et la longueur du temps soient bien plus fortes conseilleres que toute autre contreinte. »

essay devoted to “good and evil,” these few paragraphs speak to the larger sentiments of Jews living in France under false pretenses. He deliberately takes a stance on the topic, while (still) showing some sympathy toward their position.

This is the only instance in which the Jews serve a substantial role in Montaigne’s *Essais*. They appear elsewhere, but only as secondary examples in larger stories: in book 1, essay 48, *Des destries* [Of Steeds], Montaigne highlights that under the Grand Turk, “neither Christian nor Jew” were permitted to have their own horse;²⁰⁵ in a discussion of suicide in *Coustume de l’isle de Cea* [Custom of the Isle of Cea], he mentions Jewish women killing themselves with their newly born babies to escape the wrath of Antiochus IV (who is always portrayed by Jews as a major villain in Jewish traditions such as Hanukah);²⁰⁶ by far his longest essay, *Apologie de Raimond Sebond* [Apologia of Raymond Sebond] again mentions the Jews because of circumcision.²⁰⁷

Apart from *Essais*, Montaigne’s poems and letters were extensive and diverse, but for the purpose of this study, only the letter to his father on the death of his friend, Étienne de la Boétie, is significant. La Boétie was born in Sarlat, in the Perigord region, to an aristocratic family. His father was a royal official and his mother was sister to the president of the parlement of Bordeaux. Orphaned at a young age, La Boétie was raised by his uncle. He received his law degree from the University of Orléans in 1553, and earned a royal appointment to the parlement 1554, despite being under the age requirement. It was in the parlement that he met Montaigne in

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 121; « Le grand Seigneur ne permet aujourd'huy ny à Chrestien ny à Juif d'avoir cheval à soy, à ceux qui sont sous son empire. »

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 356; « Les femmes Juifves, apres avoir fait circoncire leurs enfans, s'alloient precipiter quant et eux, fuyant la cruauté d'Antiochus. »

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 574.

1559, when the two served together.²⁰⁸ La Boétie is best known as a writer, philosopher, and close friend of Montaigne. Montaigne's letter to his father upon the death of his friend, reveals that close to his death, La Boétie called for a priest, "as all good Christians must," but when the priest arrived he confessed his heritage to both the priest and Montaigne: "I protest that as I have been baptized and as I have lived, so I want to die in the faith and religion which Moses first planted in Egypt, that the Fathers then received in Judea and which has been brought into France, passed from person to person through the succession of time."²⁰⁹ Although La Boétie would likely not have been considered a *marrano*, his residency in Bordeaux and his position in the parlement only four years after the issuance of the *lettres patentes* in the region (even though the parlement did not, as previously discussed, initially register them) place him in southwestern France at a time when it is quite likely that he had privately converted to Judaism. The idea of La Boétie as Jewish is altogether shocking when considering his outspoken stance on religious toleration: simply stated, he believed allowing the practice of both Catholicism and Protestantism undermined the authority of the crown. The most La Boétie would have allowed for Protestants was the right to worship in private – as he did as a French Jew – and so religious peace would only be achieved through conciliation and concord through Church reforms.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Murray N. Rothbard, "The Political Thought of Étienne de la Boétie," Ludwig von Mises Institute, https://www.mises.org/rothbard/Boetie.asp#_ftn1.

²⁰⁹ Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works of Montaigne* trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 1054; « ...je proteste, que comme j'ay esté baptizé, ay vescu, ainsi veux-je mourir sous la foy et religion que Moysse plant premièrement en Egypte, que les Peres receurent depuis en Judée, et qui de main en main par succession de temps a été apportée en France. »

²¹⁰ Perez Zagorin, *How the Ideas of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 91.

As a French Catholic himself, Montaigne's close friendship with a privately practicing Jew would have easily shaped his opinion on France's Jews;²¹¹ however, as Marvin Lowenthal has suggested, it may actually have been Montaigne's own mother who fully shaped these opinions. Montaigne says nothing of his mother in his writings, but she was, in fact, of Jewish descent. Born Antoinette de Louppes of a Toulouse and Bordeaux family of *marranos*, she herself had converted to Protestantism later in life.²¹² Her ancestors had escaped from the Spanish Inquisition, although her grandfather had been burned at Saragossa for his refusal to convert.²¹³ These various influences around Montaigne undoubtedly helped shape his religious tolerance.

The *Salons* and the Era of Enlightenment

While the seventeenth century saw the influence of religion and humanism on sacred chronicles (focusing on the lives of religious figures), the emergence of *salon* culture in the major centers of Europe altered the focus of literature and discussion at the upper levels of society. Typically run by prominent women of the nobility, the European *salons* – and particularly in Paris – sparked a rise in the level of intellect among the upper levels of society. As Steven Kale argues in his work *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848*, the demand for higher and higher levels of education in

²¹¹ See Myriam Yardeni, *Anti-Jewish Mentalities in Early Modern Europe* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990); Yardeni notes that while Montaigne pleaded for personal insights and toleration, he ultimately “was a Catholic because this was the established religion in his country and he was not overly sympathetic toward the Jews.” (9)

²¹² Marvin Lowenthal, *The Autobiography of Michel de Montaigne* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1999), 26-27; see also Harry Friedenwald, “Montaigne's Relation to Judaism and the Jews,” in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 31:2 (1940), 141-148.

²¹³ Cecil Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 56.

the salons meant that learning became highly valuable in elite circles.²¹⁴ The salons also contributed to “an extraordinary degree of cultural homogeneity among the elite as people from diverse backgrounds read the same books, discussed the same ideas, used the same language, and acquired many of the same tastes.”²¹⁵ The ideas of the Enlightenment were thus born in the *salons*, beginning in the seventeenth century. As Madame de Chastenay wrote, “we were all brought up to think of men as equals, to mistrust vain distinctions, to feel the obligations to be worthy of equality, to enjoy its benefits as well as the etiquette that increased the price.”²¹⁶ This was not, however, always applied to the Jews. As Hertzberg states, “throughout the eighteenth century an important anti-Jewish element could always be found among the new thinkers, even as they were arguing for tolerance for all opinions.”²¹⁷

Religion came into the focus of Enlightenment discussions with the writings of Baruch Spinoza. Born into the established Sephardic community of Amsterdam in 1632, Spinoza’s early life and education were dominated by his Jewish heritage.²¹⁸ The publication of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* [Theological-Political Treatise], in Latin in 1670, placed Spinoza’s religious philosophy in the public sphere. Copies began to find their way to Paris, and the appearance of a French translation in 1678 in Leiden, Amsterdam, and Cologne led to a greater diffusion of his arguments across the *salons*. Spinoza put forth a systematic critique of organized

²¹⁴ Steven Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 35.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ See Victorine de Chastenay, *Mémoires, 1771-1815* (Paris: Perrin, 1987).

²¹⁷ Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment and the Jews*, 29.

²¹⁸ Charles Jarrett, *Spinoza: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2007), 9.

religion, but most importantly of Judaism.²¹⁹ His argument that scripture does not teach philosophy and that common misunderstandings of the Bible have led to corruption and fragmentation in the Church sparked debates over the trustworthiness of the Bible.²²⁰

Secularizing these old arguments allowed for medieval anti-Semitic sentiments to arise again. While works by thinkers such as Jean Bodin – including his political work, *Six livres de la république* [Six Books of the Republic]²²¹, which advocated for tolerance in the sake of the *raison d'état* – had appeared by the late sixteenth century, the sentiments of religious toleration that came from the conclusion of the Wars of Religion had not become widespread.²²²

Another thinker, however, had inspired Spinoza's treatment of the Bible. Isaac de la Peyrère, the most notable enemy of Christian orthodoxy in France during the seventeenth century, stressed the importance of Jews even in Christian theology: the Book of Genesis, he argued, is about the origins of the Jews, who had descended from Adam, but all other men descended from the race that had existed before the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden. There were two human families and two theologies, each proper to its own human type. Peyrère's point, therefore, was to suggest that there was a true natural religion, one that was anterior to both Judaism and Christianity.²²³ These arguments, which appeared in his *Systema*

²¹⁹ Spinoza had been excommunicated from the Jewish community in 1656.

²²⁰ Hertzberg, *French Enlightenment and the Jews*, 30.

²²¹ Bodin introduced *république* or “republic” as a term referring to matters of public law. The contemporary English rendering was “commonwealth.”

²²² For a further discussion of Bodin's views on religious tolerance, see again Yardeni, *Anti-Jewish Mentalities in Early Modern Europe*, 8.

²²³ See Richard Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1676): His Life, Work, and Influence* (Boston: Brill, 1987). Popkin's second chapter traces the “Pre-Adamite Theory” from the “ancients” up until the adoption of this theory by La Peyrère.

theologicum ex preadamitarum hypothesi [The Theological System of the Pre-Adamite Hypothesis] in 1655, would serve as the base for Spinoza's arguments. Popular Enlightenment discussions of religion, however, chose to center their arguments around Spinoza, as he did not suggest that man existed before Adam, and that Adam's only descendants were the Jews.

While French public opinion and statesmanship continued to evolve through the eighteenth century, the political question of the Jews was never of dominant importance to either France or across the rest of Europe. It would not be until the nineteenth century that this question would become a storm center for debate. The *philosophes* were, however, considerably involved in discussing the Jews, particularly in the eighteenth century as the relationship between France and its Jews changed considerably (as discussed in Chapter 2). The inclusion of the Jews in Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* [Encyclopedia], which attempted to incorporate all of the world's knowledge into one text, shows not only this interest in Jews but also how the *philosophes* came to understand them. The definition of *Juif* (according to "the author of the *Lettres persanes*," which will be discussed below) is "a member of the Jewish sect. That religion... is an old trunk that produced two branches, Christianity and Islam, which have covered the whole world."²²⁴ The entry even goes so far as to recount the "history" of Jews, taken from the Old Testament.²²⁵

Enlightenment writers used Jewish characters in a multitude of ways, to invoke certain ideas. According to Ronald Schechter, these included "fanaticism and tolerance; carnality and

²²⁴ Jean le Rond d'Alembert and Denis Diderot, eds. *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres. Tome IX^{ème}* (Paris: À Livourne, 1751), 22; this definition includes part of Lettre 60 from *Lettres persanes*.

²²⁵ The full 24-page-long *Juif* article also includes sections on their morals, ideals, and religious practices.

spirituality; the ‘natural’ role of ceremony and dogma in religious belief and practice; the proper relationship between religion and morality; the moral effects of commerce and agriculture; the merits and demerits of ‘primitive’ life and ‘civilization,’ antiquity and modernity; uniformity and diversity among human groups; and stasis and malleability in human nature, and the relative desirability of each.”²²⁶ Even within one single work, Jewish characters could switch what they represented. To understand these representations better, it is necessary to analyze major works of the time, namely those written by Montesquieu, the marquis d’Argens, and Voltaire, to deduce what these representations meant to readers and the writers themselves.

Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu

The *Lettres persanes* [Persian Letters], published in 1721, launched Montesquieu’s career as a *philosophe*. Composed of letters allegedly written by a Persian traveler, Usbek, his compatriot, Rica, and their correspondents in Isfahan, the epistolary novel follows Usbek and Rica on a trip across France. During their trip and a long stay in Paris, they comment on numerous aspects of Christian society, particularly on French politics. Most importantly, the novel points out that someone could be a Persian, or even a Jew, coming from the recognition of a bigotry that considered others not only inferior but also questioned how they could possibly exist.

Montesquieu’s *lettres* are broken down into four sections. The first 21 track the journey from Isfahan to France, which lasts almost fourteen months (from 19 March 1711 to 4 May 1712). *Lettres* 22 through 89 are spent in Paris during the reign of Louis XIV (who had already moved his court to Versailles), from May 1712 to September 1715, and *lettres* 90 through 137

²²⁶ Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 37.

are then focused on the Regency of Philippe d'Orléans, covering September 1715 to November 1720. *Lettres* 138 to 150 do not remark on France, but rather outline the collapse of Usbek's seraglio in Isfahan, which lasts approximately three years (1717–1720). While nineteen correspondents appear throughout the work writing to twenty-two different recipients, the focus does remain heavily on Usbek and Rica. Ibben, who is typically listed as a main character, functions more as an addressee than as a correspondent, writing only two letters while receiving forty-two. Choosing an epistolary structure, Montesquieu affords himself the flexibility to jump between characters and stories, providing readers with more opportunities to break and discuss what is happening throughout.

Lettre 60 is arguably the most important in particular regards to the Jews. Written by Usbek to Ibben, the letter opens with the simple question of, “you ask me whether there are Jews in France?” His first, simple response to Ibben is that he should know that “wherever, there is money, there are Jews. You ask me what they do? Precisely what they do in Persia: nothing resembles an Asian Jew like a European one. They appear among Christians [in Europe] as they do amongst [Muslims in Persia], with an invincible stubbornness for their religion that verges on madness.”²²⁷ Usbek elaborates on their religion, referring to Judaism as “a mother who has produced two daughters, which have overwhelmed her with a thousand wounds: in religion, the closest are the greatest. But given the various harsh treatments that she has received, she has not

²²⁷ Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1949), 218; « Tu me demandes s'il y a des Juifs en France ? Sache que, partout où il y a de l'argent, il y a des Juifs. Tu me demandes ce qu'ils y font ? Précisément ce qu'ils font en Perse : rien ne ressemble plus à un Juif d'Asie qu'un juif européen. Ils font paroître chez les Chrétiens, comme parmi nous, une obstination invincible pour leur religion, qui va jusques à la folie. »

stopped taking glory for having brought them on the world; she uses the one and the other to cover the entire world, while, on the other hand, her venerable age spans across time.”²²⁸

The Jews are thus seen “as the source of the entire world’s sanctity,” and the origin of all religion. Usbek states that the Jews view Muslims as heretics who changed the religious laws, or almost like they are rebel Jews. He argues to Ibben that “if the change had been made gradually, [the Jews] believe they would have been easily deceived; but, as it came about suddenly and in a violent manner, as they are able to mark the day and time of the birth [of Christianity and Islam], they were scandalized to find us aged, and standing firm in a religion that the world itself did not predate.”²²⁹ Usbek sees the Jews looking down upon the Muslims as heretics because they changed the old Jewish laws, implying that Christians are also heretics. These comments raise questions about the relative merit of status, and call out changes in law and belief. In these discussions, the Jews appear when questioning the possibility of staying the same and even the morality of staying the same.²³⁰ In this sense, the Jews of Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* reflected the economic and political status of France’s Jews – while the Jews of Bordeaux were striving to remain constant in their rights and privileges, the Jews of southeastern and eastern France were attempting to change their position in society.

²²⁸ Ibid; « c’est une mère qui a engendré deux filles qui l’ont accablée de mille plaies : car, en fait de religion, les plus proches sont les plus grandes ennemies. Mais, quelque mauvais traitements qu’elle en ait reçus, elle ne laisse pas de se glorifier de les avoir mises au monde ; elle se sert de l’une et de l’autre pour embrasser le monde entier, tandis que, d’un autre côté, sa vieillesse vénérable embrasse tous les temps. »

²²⁹ Ibid, 128; « Si le changement s’était fait insensiblement, ils croient qu’ils auraient été facilement séduits ; mais, comme il s’est fait tout à coup et d’une manière violente, comme ils peuvent marquer le jour et l’heure de l’une et de l’autre naissance, ils se scandalisent de trouver en nous des âges, et se tiennent fermes à une religion que le monde même n’a pas précédée. »

²³⁰ Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 39.

Schechter argues that, “the curious presence of Jews in a novel about the relationship between Christendom and the Islamic world serves simply to intensify the sense of doubt that Christian readers might have had about their religion’s monopoly on truth.”²³¹ Both the Jews and Muslims of the *Lettres persanes* are also intelligent, literate, and rational thinkers, eroding the belief that Christianity is the only religion that a civilized human may have. The Muslim and Jewish characters are aware of prejudices about their intellect, and take them with pride. In Letter 143, for example, Rica writes a Jewish physician, Nathanaël Lévi, in response to Lévi’s question: “You ask me what I think of the worth of these amulets and the power of these talismans. Why speak to me of it? You are a Jew, and I am Muslim; that is to say we are both very gullible.”²³² Here Rica acknowledges the superstitious stereotypes of Jews in European society, because of the good luck or good fortune that these amulets or talismans brought. The use of amulets in his *Lettres persanes* shows Montesquieu possessed at least a basic understanding of Judaism, as the Talmud remarks several times on Jews possessing amulets. While Jewish law strictly prohibits reciting verses of the Torah for the purpose of curing existing illness, they were permitted to guard against or ward off future sicknesses.²³³ Again, the belief that amulets and talismans served a superstitious purpose acts as another distinction between Catholics and Jews, distancing France’s Christian population even further from the “others.”

²³¹ Ibid, 38.

²³² Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, “Lettre CXLIII. Rica à Nathanaël Lévi, médecin juif à Livourne,” in *Lettres persanes Tome second* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1873), 129; « Tu me demandes ce que je pense de la vertu des amulettes et de la puissance des talismans. Pourquoi t’adresses-tu à moi ? Tu es juif, et je suis mahométan ; c’est-à-dire que nous sommes tous deux bien crédules. »

²³³ Theodore Schrire, “Amulets,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (online: The Gale Group, 2008), http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0002_0_01036.html.

Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, marquis d'Argens

Inspired by Montesquieu's writings, d'Argens began publishing his *Lettres juives* [The Jewish Letters, or known commonly in English as The Jewish Spy]²³⁴ in December 1735. Releasing them two at a time, it took twenty months for all 180 *lettres* to be published. The *lettres* sold in volumes of thirty so that by 1737, six volumes had been published and circulated. As Schechter points out, the sheer number of copies published was enormous: "Numerous translations of the novel...appeared in English, German and Dutch. According to d'Argens' agent, the authorized publisher printed 2,100 copies of volume 5 in 1737. If that number is accurate and representative of the typical print run, then within forty years more than 200,000 volumes of the *Lettres* would have circulated in France alone."²³⁵

D'Argens' epistolary novel was structured in much the same way as Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*. Presented as French translations of letters originally written in Hebrew, the novel followed two Jewish friends, Aaron Monceca, a Jewish traveler from Constantinople, and Isaac Onis, a rabbi of Constantinople. Their friend Jacob Brito, a Jewish merchant travelling in Italy and North Africa, occasionally adds to the story. These letters not only commented on what was seen along their travels through the Christian world, but also included long discussions of every conceivable subject. D'Argens' work is critical of any form of tyranny, slavery, and

²³⁴ While d'Argens never seems to have intended the work to take on a title that would ultimately portray the Jews in a negative light, the first translation published in English in London by D. Brown and R. Hett in 1739, utilized this title.

²³⁵ Schechter cites two letters written between Jean-Baptiste Boyer, marquis d'Argens and Prosper Marchand, his printer. These numbers remain speculative because no other evidence has yet been uncovered to support the claims of the printer.

ensorship, not only under monarchies, but also in republics such as Genoa.²³⁶ Like the *Lettres persanes*, d'Argens' work offered European readers the opportunity to be involved with "exotic" or eastern commentators, affording them an unusual perspective on Western manners, values, and customs. D'Argens' Jews could look at the "Nazarenes," the term they utilized for Christians, as unusual or bizarre. Because the readers could identify with the story's Christians, they were easily able to adopt this newer perspective as well.²³⁷

Like Montesquieu, d'Argens questioned under what circumstances human beings could or should change. D'Argens does not, however, invoke a feeling of exoticism or orientalism, instead allowing for any Jewish differences to coincide with a new Jewish sameness (the Jews of Constantinople were the same as the Jews of France). The transnational nature of European Jewry was able to exist with d'Argens' portrayal of his characters as natural cosmopolitans, because even though they came from the East they were still of one Jewish "sameness" that crosses borders.²³⁸ In this sense, Issac writes to Aaron, "When we examine all men in general, we perceive all of the resemblances between one and the other. The differences in climate change nothing in their hearts: it does nothing but feel in the fashion of the country. Love is the same in Constantinople as in Paris."²³⁹ This sense of "sameness" among all men, and typically

²³⁶ Julia Gasper, *The Marquis d'Argens: A Philosophical Life* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 91.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

²³⁸ Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 210.

²³⁹ Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, marquis d'Argens, *Lettres juives, ou correspondance philosophique, historique & critique* (The Hague: Pierre Paupie, 1754), Vol. 1, letter 9, 94; « Lorsqu'on examine les hommes en général, on apperçoit beaucoup de ressemblance des uns aux autres. La différence de climat ne change rien aux cœurs : elle ne fait que les habiller à la mode des pays. On aime à Constantinople comme à Paris. »

among all Jews, is startling when compared to the notion that Jews in France belong to some categorical “other,” and especially considering the long history of “otherness” within the kingdom (i.e. “The Huguenot Question”). Like the Jews of Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes*, d’Argens creates characters that are cultivated and who traveled extensively: Aaron voyages to France, Holland, and England; Isaac visits Jerusalem, Smyrna, and Cairo; and Jacob travels through Italy, Spain, and Turkey.

The concept of one’s heart or mind changing is regularly applied to d’Argens original question. As Schechter argues, “the thematic oppositions between stasis and change, immutability and mutability, stubbornness and flexibility, bigotry and open-mindedness run throughout...”²⁴⁰ Jewish stubbornness in particular crops up throughout *Lettres*, especially in discussions related to the heart or mind and religion. In a letter to Isaac, Aaron asks:

What do you think, my dear Isaac, of a religion liable to so many changes? Stability and immutability are the marks of truth. This Daughter of Heaven never varies, nor does she run after novelty, and does not lend her ear to the chimerical notions of mankind. Have you ever seen in paganism, I do not mean enlightened paganism, but the crassest idolatry, anything more monstrous than to call into question whether the creature must love their creator? From the moment that God gave law to His people, it has been His first Commandment. The Nazarenes believe, teach, and maintain the same Commandments that were written on Mount Sinai. How do they not serve and protect them from such errors? I believe the God of Abraham has poured the spirit of perversion upon them, which impedes them from utilizing the clearest notions. They accuse us every day for our obstinacy and lack of cooperation.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 45.

²⁴¹ D’Argens, *Lettres juives*, Vol. 1, letter 2, 19; « Que penses-tu, mon cher Isaac, d’une religion sujette au changement ? La stabilité & l’immuabilité sont les marques de la vérité. Cette fille du ciel n’est point vacillante : elle ne court pas après la nouveauté, & ne se prête pas aux idées chimériques des hommes. As-tu jamais vû dans le paganisme, je ne dis pas dans le paganisme éclairé, mais dans l’idolâtrie la plus crasse, rien d’aussi monstrueux que d’agiter si la créature doit aimer son créateur ? Dès le moment que Dieu donna la loi à son peuple, ce fut-là son premier commandement. Les nazaréens croient, enseignent, conservent les mêmes

Jacob also laments to Aaron that Christians are always quick to label Jewish consistency as stubbornness. The virtue of the Jewish religion is called into question by the actions of Isaac, who has converted from rabbinical Judaism to Karaism.²⁴² While the novel initially sets up perfect support for rabbinical devotion, the increasingly bold questions asked by Aaron of the Talmud and those who interpreted it begin to reveal Isaac's doubts, and ultimately disclose d'Argens' criticisms of the Jewish faith.²⁴³ Ironically, this not only portrays both radical changes, but also radical hostility toward these very changes.

The Writings of Voltaire

The complexities of Voltaire's stances on every issue have troubled historians for decades, so much so, that in his work *French Enlightenment and the Jews*, Hertzberg has fittingly titled the subchapter devoted to Voltaire as "The Problem of Voltaire." While Montesquieu and d'Argens simply wrote about Jews, Voltaire was, for all intents and purposes, obsessed with them. This was often inseparable from his obsession with *l'infâme*: in regards to the Jews, Voltaire saw them as the victims of fanaticism, rallying to their defense against the Church and the legacy of the Crusades. In his *Sermon du Rabbin Akib*, Voltaire argues that Christians must:

commandemens qui furent écrits sur la montagne de Sinaï. Comment ne leur servent-ils pas de soutien contre de semblables égarements ? Je crois que le dieu d'Abraham, a répandu sur eux cet esprit de perversion, qui les empêche de se servir des notions les plus claires. Ils nous reprochent tous les jours notre entêtement, notre indocilité. »

²⁴² For a detailed description of the Jewish heresy known as Karaism, see Meira Polliack, "Medieval Karaism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* ed. Martin Goodman, Jeremy Cohen, and David Sorkin (Oxford: Oxford Handbooks Online, 2002), 295-322.

²⁴³ Gasper, *The Marquis d'Argens*, 93.

...cease to persecute and to exterminate those who are as men their brothers, and as Jews their fathers. Let each serve God in the religion where he was born, without wanting to tear the heart from his neighbor in disputes where no one listens to the other. Let everyone serve his sovereign and his homeland, without ever using obedience to God to justify disobeying the law. Adonai, who has created us all, who does not want misfortunes on you, creature! God, our common father, God of Mercy: let there no longer be in this small world, in the most insignificant of the worlds, neither fanatics nor persecutors!²⁴⁴

He mentions the burning of Jews throughout multiple works, and even includes a scene of an auto-da-fé in *Candide*, making it the most famous of all his references.²⁴⁵ Yet this association of Jews as victims of fanaticism and intolerance was quite unstable, as Voltaire was equally quick to portray the Jews as fanatics themselves.²⁴⁶

While it was quite clear to his contemporaries that Voltaire preferred an “enlightened Jew” to Biblical Jews, his stance on the *marranos* was quite clear: “These *marranos* go wherever there is money to be made... But that these circumcised Jews who sell old clothes to the savages claim that they are of the tribe of Naphtali or Issachar is not of the slightest importance.”²⁴⁷ This statement shows a connection not only to the situation of Jews in France at that time (because, as

²⁴⁴ Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire, tome 24* ed. Louis Moland (Paris: Garnier, 1879), 284; « Que les prévaricateurs, qui dans leur propre loi ont besoin de tant d'indulgence, cessent donc de persécuter, d'exterminer ceux qui comme hommes sont leurs frères, et qui comme Juifs sont leurs pères. Que chacun serve Dieu dans la religion où il est né, sans vouloir arracher le cœur à son voisin par des disputes où personne ne s'entend. Que chacun serve son prince et sa patrie, sans jamais employer le prétexte d'obéir à Dieu pour désobéir aux lois, Adonai, qui nous as créés tous, qui ne veux pas le malheur de tes créatures! Dieu, père commun, Dieu de miséricorde, fais qu'il n'y ait plus sur ce petit globe, sur ce moindre de les mondes, ni fanatiques, ni persécuteurs! »

²⁴⁵ Voltaire, *Candide, ou l'optimisme* (Paris: Hachette, 1913), 48.

²⁴⁶ Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 47.

²⁴⁷ Voltaire, *Correspondence* ed. Theodore Besterman (Geneva: Institut et musée Voltaire, 1953), LXXXVI, 166.

we have seen in Chapter 2, the Jews of France were still involved in the trade of old clothes) but also to the discussions of the Enlightenment. In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Spinoza cited circumcision as the crucial reason for the continued existence of Jews. It was the ultimate expression of bodily marking that kept Jews separate from Catholics, and the easiest identifier amongst a community of mixed religion. Voltaire added to Spinoza's idea of the Jews that "they are, nonetheless, the greatest scoundrels who have ever sullied the face of the globe."²⁴⁸ This statement, written in a letter to Jean Baptiste Nicolas de Lisle de Sales in 1773, is in stark contrast to an earlier letter from Voltaire written in 1762, in which he states, "I am not mad at a single Portuguese Jew, I respect them all."²⁴⁹ Based on these two conflicting statements alone, it is difficult to firmly nail down Voltaire's stance on the Jews, and yet looking at his larger body of work does little to ease this trouble.

While historians debated over whether or not Voltaire was anti-Semitic, it is difficult to claim either way. The contradictory messages portrayed from one piece to another can be attributed to the sheer number of works he penned: inconsistencies would be common. Peter Gay, however, proposed that Voltaire's stance on Judaism might be explained as a carry-over from the *philosophes'* rejection of a Christian upbringing – that anti-Semitic sentiments had been ingrained in him in his youth, but he was ultimately tolerant.²⁵⁰ He praised the Jews for their fidelity to ancient traditions, but also discounted this as an inherently "Jewish" trait, simply putting that this was human nature. He may have tolerated the Jews simply because, as Schechter

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Voltaire, *Un Chrétien contre six Juifs* (London: 1777), 86; « Je ne suis fâché contre aucun juif Portugais, je les estime tous.... »

²⁵⁰ Peter Gay, *Voltaire's Politics: The Poet as Realist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 351-354.

argues, “the Jews provided the best test for the hypothesis of human perfectibility, for if the most notoriously inflexible of people could change, then, *a fortiori*, anyone could change.”²⁵¹ Any flexibility on behalf of the Jews would be the key to the malleability of humankind. This struggle between stubbornness and flexibility in human nature – and particularly in Jews – fueled French writers through the Enlightenment, but the writings of Voltaire have provided historians the rare opportunity to study this oscillation within one massive set of works.

Conclusions

Portrayals of Jews through the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries evolved from biblical tales to contemporary accounts. If the Jewish characters of the *mystères* were meant to distinctly represent an “other” within France, then the writings of the *philosophes* during the Enlightenment, by contrast, were meant to reverse this idea. The Classics of du Ryer and Racine can be seen, as the close predecessors to works written during the eighteenth century. Their use of biblical Jews allowed the Classicists to reverse the “otherness” of the Jews onto Persian characters, giving spectators an opportunity to relate with something more comfortable to them. This was especially true with the usage of Esther, a character who was claimed by both Jews and Christians as a biblical heroine. The emphasis on theme rather than plot allowed the audience to engage and think about what was really being portrayed on stage.

The ideas of the *philosophes* that were discussed in the *salons* allowed for the emergence of religious writings that took these same concepts from the Classicists and applied them to a larger audience. The use of Jews as main characters in the writings of Montesquieu and d’Argens allowed for the reflection of stereotypes and questioned the typical roles given to Jews. The *philosophes* wrote of contemporary Jews in non-traditional ways, allowing for perceptions of

²⁵¹ Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 53.

Jews to evolve because of a work's influence on its audience. Working against strict censorship, the *philosophes* were still afforded the ability to criticize French Catholicism using the Jews as tools to question the morality of religion. They reflected contemporary Jewish communities – rather than biblical Jews – in their stories, essays, and poems, allowing society to reflect upon the reality of Jews within the kingdom.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the role of Jews in Early Modern France was both politically and culturally complex, and their economic benefit to the kingdom was unquestionable. The tolerance for these communities is astonishing when juxtaposed against the harsh treatment of the Huguenots, but made less surprising considering the lengths the Jews went to for peace. When the *marranos* and *portugais* first began to enter southern France, they filled an economic void that had been left after the Hundred Years' War. As Jews were permitted to settle in the city of Metz in the east, they were able to contribute to the importation of goods into a region where resources had been depleted by decades of war. Meanwhile, the existence of Jews within the Pope's own territory showed that these communities could thrive under any circumstance. The portrayal of Jews in literature and on the stage created new ways for French people to reflect upon their own religious convictions. Ultimately, the Jews played an important role – although most likely unintentional – during the centralization of the state.

The issuance of *lettres patentes* to the *portugais* residents of Bordeaux in 1550 was crucial not only to French Jewish history, but also to the development of the crown. As Chapter 2 has demonstrated, the process of going above local officials not only increased the opportunities for the Jews in southern France, but also unintentionally increased the authority of the monarchy within the region. The very settlement of Jews along the border with Spain had initially hinged upon the distance of the area from the crown. Even with the establishment of the parlement of Bordeaux in 1462, the Aquitaine region had maintained a high level of political independence.

The legal establishment of the *marranos* and *portugais*, however, altered the way the crown could and would interact in the province. As the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries progressed, subsequent renewals of the *lettres patentes* brought the crown back to the south and increased the opportunities for the it to challenge local power.

Although the Jews of eastern France entered the kingdom as openly professed Jews and not under the guise of converted Christians (as was necessary for the Jews in the south), the situation of Jews in the regions of Alsace and Lorraine was still quite similar to that of their kinsmen in Bordeaux. While the *portugais* settled under false Christian pretenses, the Jews in eastern France entered the kingdom as openly practicing Jews. These Jews also changed the degree of state influence in eastern France through their *lettres patentes*, but the open profession of their Jewish faith showed the willingness of the crown to bend its stance on religion to further its own gains. The economic benefits the Jews provided in Alsace and Lorraine – bringing new gold and specie into the kingdom, their connections to German cities and trading centers, the ability to import livestock during shortages, etc. – far outweighed any issues that may have come about through conflicting religions. Even though Huguenots were being persecuted in other regions of the kingdom, the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine did not possess the economic or political privileges that could have served as a threat to the Catholic authority of the French crown. Instead, the monarchy openly and willingly permitted the establishment of a Jewish community in 1564 – merely two years after fighting between Catholics and Protestants had broken out.

The cultural aspect of the Jews, meanwhile, had been simultaneously building throughout the establishment of Jewish communities across France. Jewish characters appeared in various genres of French literature, and their usage evolved from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries depending on what emotions or perspectives the writer was attempting to portray. The

dramatists of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries utilized biblical Jews to emphasize to the audience the importance of devotion to God. The choice of subjects such as the story of Esther, who could be championed as a heroine in both Jewish and Christian religious texts, revealed how it was possible to be an “other” amongst the rest of the population. Moving into the eighteenth century, as intellectual discussions shifted and the French Enlightenment spread, the literary usage of Jews began to change as well. Those writings by the *philosophes* that included Jews represented them in ways that went against typical stereotypes. The Jews of the Enlightenment were often intelligent, well written, cultured, and well-traveled. Jewish characters were devout in their religion and were used by the *philosophes* to highlight the problems that they saw in French Catholicism.

How, then, does one affect the other? Were representations of Jews from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries accurate, and to what extent did they influence the reality of France’s Jewish population? While it may be difficult to recreate the exact attitudes that were felt toward the Jews over two hundred years ago, it is possible to infer through this study how culture influenced politics, and vice-versa.

To begin with, the evolution in representations closely followed the shifts in Jewish rights through the centuries. Portrayals of Esther as a secret Jew mirrored the situation of the *marranos* and *portugais* residing in Bordeaux and the surrounding areas who lived under the pretense of being Christian. Esther’s dual role as a Jewish and Christian heroine was tested in early plays that set her in foreign lands, allowing the audience to remove themselves from the story and reflect upon what was emotionally building on stage. The pride, stubbornness, and sinfulness of Jews such as Haman were transformed into examples of proper devotion that should be applied to any “good Christians.” A strong devotion to God was typically emphasized, but placed

viewers in an odd situation: how should one apply the worship of a devout Jew to one's own practice as a French Catholic? These works allowed for Jews to be not only more accessible to Frenchmen who were not accustomed to them within their Christian communities, but for them to also become a pathway for critiques upon society.

As literary styles shifted from Humanism to Classicism, audiences were faced with much more realistic representations of people. Instead of biblical Jews that were in the distant past, these plays brought the past into the present and confronted viewers with an experience that they were to become involved with. In essence, the Classicists allowed Frenchmen to come into contact with biblical Jews that had more modern qualities about them. The action depicted on stage – while often far from being historically or biblically accurate – brought forth vivid scenes that featured Jewish characters that lacked religious substance. Now audiences were not only confronted with characters that they could more easily relate to, but they were being goaded along into ignoring the inherent religious difference between themselves and the Jews being portrayed on stage. Unfortunately, anti-Semitic sentiments crept their way into these works, but these feelings allow us to reflect back upon them in hindsight and analyze how perceptions of Jews had evolved from the sixteenth into the seventeenth century. People would have had to grapple with representations of Jews as being abominable, heinous, and poisoned,²⁵² but also with the usage of people that could not only be “others” but also still very relatable.

The real influences of French literature upon the treatment of Jews would arguably not have occurred until the emergence of the *salons* and the subsequent Enlightenment movement in the late seventeenth century. The diffusion of topics across the upper levels of society would have permitted new ideas to bridge the gap between the *salons* of cities such as Paris over to the

²⁵² Refer back, for example, to the discussion on Racine's *Esther*.

court in Versailles. The discussion in Chapter 2 of the *lettres patentes* of Louis XVI in 1784 showed how it was necessary for the crown to diffuse any anti-Semitic sentiments amongst provincial elites that could disrupt the privileges afforded to the Jews – particularly in regions such as Aquitaine, Alsace, and Lorraine, where the Jews maintained important economic roles during a time when the state was experiencing such an enormous fiscal crisis.

Were anti-Semitic sentiments inherent to early modern European society, and to what extent did that play out in France? As Chapter 3 has demonstrated, that discussion is much more complex than this study because even the *philosophes* were divided over the Jewish question. Writers such as Montesquieu and d'Argens were proponents for religious toleration and both utilized religious foreigners to write about topics that seemed extremely relevant to the French elites that would have read these works. The use of foreigners in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* allowed him to critique French culture, society, and politics without fear of retribution because the character would be seeing everything through the lens of an outsider. He drew upon the metaphors of Judaism as the mother to both Christianity and Islam, allowing him to make conclusions about Islam that could easily have been applied to Christianity. His critique of Christian religion through a filter of Muslims and Jews allowed the reader to not only reflect upon their own beliefs and practices but to also shape their view of "outsiders" within France. D'Argens, on the other hand, chose to deliver his critiques of the West directly through the usage of Jews. Like Montesquieu, d'Argens allowed French readers to look at their own culture through the eyes of "exotic" and foreign characters, permitting them the opportunity to reflect upon their own standing and the role of religion in France.

The writings of the *philosophes* ultimately filled the void of religious discussion that was left after the conclusion of the French Wars of Religion. The lasting impact of these wars, as

discussed in Chapter 1, altered both the political and cultural landscape of France. The suppression of the Huguenots across France showed the lengths the monarchy would go to ensure its power would be left unrivaled in the kingdom. The slightly increased involvement of the monarchy in the provinces with the issuance of *lettres patentes* would continue to grow after the wars as the state crushed rebellion and quickly centralized. Although French absolutism has long been embodied by the reign of Louis XIV, it is arguable that the short twelve-year reign of Henri IV was the most crucial to this development of the absolutist state. After reclaiming his kingdom, Henri was able to draw the power of the state inward and then effectively initiate reform. Financially, Henri IV was able to shift France in the right direction. His assassination in 1610 brought the unfortunate period of two regencies split by the reign of Louis XIII; however, important steps toward absolutism were also taken during this time. Cardinal Richelieu's policies toward the Spanish Habsburgs – while extremely costly – propelled France toward dominating European politics. The power of the state increased immensely in the years leading up to the personal rule of Louis XIV, culminating in his assumption of the role of *premier ministre*.

As both Chapters 1 and 2 have shown, it was ironically during the period of Louis XIV that the state's stance on religion began to shift. Both the Edict of Fontainebleau and the issuance of the *Code noir* in 1685 marked turning points for religion in France – with the former revoking the Edict of Nantes and the latter expelling the Jews from France's colonies – before the issuance of the two decrees by Colbert de Croissy in 1686 and 1687 that unintentionally inspired the *portugais* of Bordeaux to shed their Christian pretenses and outwardly profess their Jewish faith. It is challenging to account for one action when placed next to the other, even considering that Croissy's decrees were meant to invite foreigners into France, given that the text was addressed to people of any religious conviction. This shifted the relationship between the crown and the

Jews of France, who began to help their own poor and form the institutions that would help them establish their communities more firmly in the regions where they were present.

Ultimately, France's Jewish population may have been fractured by distance but it is still possible to view it as one over-arching community. Posener's argument that the Jews could not be unified because of the distance separating each community can no longer be relevant. While it is true that the larger settlements were separated by vast distances, the existence of smaller communities spread out across the kingdom meant that the Jews of Bordeaux could easily reach the Jews of Alsace if need be. The difference in the origins of both the southern (Sephardim) and eastern (Ashkenazi) Jews could serve as a possible detriment to the case, but not so when the situation is compared to that of the French themselves. The glaring differences between the people of northern and southern France – who even to this day speak very different dialects, and even separate languages from French – highlight the importance of the Jewish communal history. If France's territories can be separated by both vast stretches of land and glaring cultural differences, why are the Jews not afforded the same privilege? Their assumed economic and political roles coupled with their cultural and societal positions granted the Jews of France an altogether unique experience and history. The usage of Jews in French literature has permitted us the opportunity to reflect upon these cultural influences, while the preservation of laws and decrees from the Ancien Régime has afforded us the chance to tie France's several Jewish settlements together into one community through shared political, economic, and cultural experiences.

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