

‘This beautiful appearance ... has gradually transformed and become altogether monstrous’: the massacre at Troyes as a foreseeable tragedy

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ABSTRACT

The massacres that took place in several provincial towns during August, September and October 1572 have attracted far less attention than the intense historical scrutiny given to events in Paris. This relative neglect gives the impression that there is nothing more to say about these episodes of violence except as aftershocks of the main event. Focusing on the case of Troyes in Champagne, this article demonstrates that the provincial massacres are worthy of re-examination. It reconsiders the context of the killing on the streets and in the prison of the town and, in particular, those who were supposedly responsible for ordering the bloodshed. Although it remains impossible to reconstruct a complete picture, the unusual richness of the surviving local sources allows for a more nuanced analysis than provided hitherto and a better-informed understanding of the events as they unfolded.

The Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre in Paris of August 1572 has long attracted detailed analysis and intense debate. The provincial massacres that followed over the ensuing six weeks, while clearly inspired by events in the capital, have their own local dynamic and story to tell. They both echo and intersect with what took place in Paris, with news of the violence and the Crown’s approval of it instrumentalized by various agents in order to try and influence regional responses, as well as reflecting local concerns. The reaction in the provinces also deepens our understanding of how the conflicts of the previous decade were able to result in a watershed moment for the Reform movement in France, a culmination of past tensions. At the same time,

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while the massacres changed everything, particularly with regard to relations between the Huguenots and the monarchy, they resolved nothing on a national scale, as the wars continued. In some communities, however, the Reformed churches would not recover and the events of 1572 would prove decisive.

One such case is that of the town of Troyes, capital of Champagne, which sat both in the orbit of the Guise family, with their seat at nearby Joinville and as provincial governors, and within the jurisdiction of the *Parlement de Paris*, just a few days' ride away. Access to the noble leadership on both sides of the confessional divide, and to the royal judiciary in Paris, form a backdrop to the appeals of both Catholic and Protestant inhabitants of Troyes to have their interests protected and upheld. At the time of the massacre, that protection fell away for the Huguenots, rendering them vulnerable to the decision-making of local officials and the lingering discontent of their Catholic neighbours. There were particular scores to be settled and longstanding disputes to be resolved. Establishing the veracity of the accounts of what took place in that crucial week and a half following the massacre in Paris, and who was responsible for the killings in Troyes, is not as straightforward as it might at first appear. Nevertheless, it is clear that there were systematic murders carried out in the town's prison after the royal directives not to extend the violence would have been received. Whether these were countermanded by other orders, as asserted in some contemporary sources and by later historians, remains uncertain.¹ Either way, the lack of a clear mandate and the resulting hesitancy of the local authorities was critical in determining the fate of those who perished. The forty to fifty Protestants who lost their lives represent a small percentage of the Troyen population of 30,000, and of the Huguenot congregation, perhaps as many as 5000–6000, at its height. But the impact of these events was profound and long lasting as the royal protection on which the Huguenots had come to rely was compromised.

Philip Benedict long ago established that the existence of secret royal orders to carry out the provincial massacres remains unproven.² Certainly there was widespread confusion about the official response in Troyes, since the prison massacre there did not take place until a full eight days after the first accounts filtering through from Paris were reported. The council deliberations during this period reveal a primary preoccupation with maintaining order and suggest at the very least 'a climate of uncertainty'.³ Even the rounding up and imprisonment of Huguenot inhabitants can be seen as precautionary rather than sinister. In other places, such as Rouen and Lyon, prisoners were killed contrary to any official instruction. It is possible that this is also what occurred in Troyes. It was an added complication that the provincial governor was Henri, duc de Guise, who was initially blamed by the Crown for the violence. However, his orders were clear that the edict was to be upheld and also a careful guard kept. Protestant sources were keen to frame municipal and royal officials rather than the Guise. Given the often hostile role of these officials in their previous treatment of the local Huguenots, including challenging their rights with regard to sites of worship, their involvement is plausible and was expected. Catholic sources, however, while confirming the massacre in the prison, attribute responsibility to the guards who carried it out. Indeed, the participation of those involved in earlier instances of violence might also suggest that they were perfectly capable of carrying out the killings without specific orders from above. Either way, it is clear that the authorities did little to prevent the massacre by placing these individuals in control of the fate of those under their guard. At the

1 P. Roberts, *A City in Conflict: Troyes during the French Wars of Religion* (Manchester, 1996), 142–62. A reconsideration of the sources has provided the opportunity for a more nuanced account.

2 P. Benedict, 'The Saint Bartholomew's massacres in the provinces', *Hist J*, 21 (1978), 210: 'the overwhelming mass of the evidence ... suggest(s) not'.

3 *Ibid.*, 213; Mingous, 'Forging memory'.

very least, as in Paris, official actions (or inaction) meant that the authorities can be considered to have had blood on their hands in this respect.⁴

I

Whatever the claims that the so-called happy edict of pacification of 1570 and royal marriage marked a reconciliation between the faiths, the tragic events of the Saint Bartholomew's massacres, whether in Paris or elsewhere, were informed and prefigured by some fifteen years of confessional tension and violence.⁵ In Troyes, a familiar repertoire of intimidation and harassment, as well as arrests and imprisonment, of the Huguenots occurred from the late 1550s when they first began to gather for worship. Some officials, such as the royal *bailli*, Anne de Vaudrey, seigneur de Saint-Phal, were involved in several periods of repression. He had been disrupting Huguenot assemblies since at least 1560 and took the initiative in driving the Huguenots out when they attempted to seize the town, in April 1562, during the first war. This event led to the massacre of around 140 mainly exiles from Troyes in nearby Bar-sur-Seine on 24 August 1562 (ten years exactly to the day before the episode in Paris), as well as violence against Huguenots on the streets and in the prison of Troyes in 1562 and early 1563.⁶ Several of those involved in these incidents, and others in 1568, both royal officeholders and members of a local armed gang, were said to have been responsible for most of the killings in 1572. This experience meant that they would have been well-rehearsed in their roles and, equally, that they knew full well whom they were targeting and where they lived, coexisting cheek by jowl with them in plain sight over at least a decade. These individuals would, of course, have been well known to the Huguenots as well, due to these earlier acts of intimidation and aggression.

The leading members of the Reformed church in Troyes were easily identified. From the early 1560s, they acted openly as representatives of and deputies for their coreligionists at meetings with municipal and royal officials, as well as pleading their interests with the Crown and leading members of the nobility, both regionally and nationally. Their names appear on various lists of suspects, including those sanctioned by the *Parlement de Paris* due to accusations of plotting to seize the town in 1562, or those forbidden from attending Reformed services in 1572.⁷ During wartime, Huguenot residents were taxed to cover the additional costs and their houses searched for the illicit keeping of weaponry; they were prohibited from holding office or serving on the local militia and sometimes expelled from the town. They also absented themselves for brief periods, to avoid harassment and violence, sometimes registering for longer periods in refuges abroad. During peace, they were seen regularly coming and going to their services through the town gates, making them easy targets for assault. The location of these services (or *prêches*) generated a fierce ongoing dispute between the Huguenots and the authorities for which both sides sought official support for their cause.

Despite their usual differences over precedence and issues such as paying tax or service on the watch, an alliance between royal, municipal and ecclesiastical authorities in Troyes coalesced around the proximity of the Huguenot site of worship to the town. The result was an ongoing campaign to prevent services being established either in the suburbs, as was designated

4 B. B. Diefendorf, 'Prologue to a massacre: popular unrest in Paris, 1557–1572', *Am Hist R*, 90 (1985), 1091: 'anyone in a position of responsibility at that moment would have known, or should have known.'

5 On the 'happy' peace: BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fo. 65v. On Paris, Diefendorf, 'Prologue to a massacre', 1067–91; J. Foa, *Tous Ceux qui tombent: visages du massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy* (Paris, 2021).

6 Roberts, *A City in Conflict*, 110–17, 126–7. The prison, used by royal officials from the *bailliage*, was situated in part of the former château of the counts of Champagne on the edge of town.

7 A[rchives] N[ationales], X2a, reg.130, fos 233v, 242 (9 and 11 Feb. 1563); Roberts, *A City in Conflict*, 204–5. Some were imprisoned in the *Conciergerie*, but since its registers only begin in 1564, it is not possible to say who or with what they were charged. AD Aube, BB14, i [Box 10], no.22 (Dec. 1562), provides some confirmatory evidence.

by the 1563 edict of Amboise, or on the nearby estates of regional nobles. Catholic opposition was quickly mobilized, with appeals against any services within four leagues of Troyes, soon increased to within five to six leagues, with a delegation sent to Paris to secure this.⁸ The new site, designated by Claude de Lorraine, duc d'Aumale, was located some six to seven leagues to the south-west.⁹ From that point over several years, the Huguenots continued to press the case for the restoration of the suburbs or of an accessible site within a more convenient distance, making appeals directly to Catherine de Médicis and Protestant leaders, but all to no avail. In the meantime, they were able to take advantage of the concession to nobles to allow worship on their estates, notably those of Antoine Ménilson, sieur de Saint-Pouange. The local authorities sought all means to obstruct these, including petitions to the Crown and to governor Guise and officials being sent to enforce the prohibition in situ, as well as to have Ménilson stripped of his royal offices.¹⁰ Apart from the desire of the authorities to stop the services, others saw opportunities to benefit from the dispute. One of these was Charles de La Rochefoucauld, sieur de Barbezieux, who in November 1568 sought to be recompensed for his service to the monarchy with the possessions of Ménilson and another lord. He requested 'to make me a gift of (these) that you must confiscate, with regard that during all the past and present troubles, they have always lived obstinately as rebels, bearing arms against you.'¹¹ Whether connected to his defiance or not, Ménilson was also being pursued for longstanding debts in the court of the *bailliage* as late as June 1572.¹²

A strong element of the appeals to the Crown in opposition to the services was their correlation with popular unrest which posed a risk to security and allowed the Huguenots to be cast as rebels. In April 1568, a petition by the Catholic inhabitants stated that it was 'greatly to be feared that under cover of their *prêches*' the Huguenots would bring in outsiders to help them seize the town as they had in the past.¹³ These themes are echoed in the responses of ordinary inhabitants to a municipal commission in April 1563 to oppose the designation of the suburbs. A door-to-door visitation was carried out by royal notaries, accompanied by heads of each watch.¹⁴ Some respondents made a direct connection between allowing the services with seizing the town or threatening the Crown and the kingdom. More strikingly, violence and murder were already an expected accompaniment to the permitting of services. Some pointed out that 'there will be more murders than ever', while others lamented that they 'would place the people in discord and at war with one another' and 'there should be no services anywhere so as to avoid, the sedition, murders and other inconveniences that could ensue'. More unusual were direct expressions of violence, such as the statement by Jehanson Barretier, 'that he would like those who wanted the services to break their necks', which is crossed out but still visible.¹⁵ Several stated their opposition to the services and afterwards the words 'under the obedience' or 'the authority of the king' have been inserted, while others proclaimed that they would do anything to prevent them or would leave the kingdom if they were allowed. It was important to

8 AD Aube, A14 [Box 171], fos 3r, 5r (22 and 29 Mar. 1563), 11 (20 Apr.), that is within 12–18 miles or 19–29 km.

9 N. Pithou de Chamgobert, *Chronique de Troyes et de la Champagne (1524–1594)*, ed. P.-E. Leroy, 2 vols (Reims, 1998 and 2000), ii. 538–9 [BnF, Mss Dupuy 698, fos 290v–1r], 18–20 miles or 29–32 km away, at Céant-en-Othe (now Bérulle), a 'nasty little town' on a 'rough, hilly and wooded path [...] deserted and ruined'.

10 AD Aube, A15 [Box 172], 124–8 (14 and 18 Mar. 1566); BB14, ii [Box 10], nos 7 (16 Mar.) and 8 (also Ménilson's protest against, i, no.47 [7 Apr. 1565]); 9 and 10 (27 June 1566, prohibitions), 11 (remonstrances).

11 BnF, Mss Fr. 15548, fo. 107r, Barbezieux to the king (3 Nov. 1568); Ménilson and other Huguenot nobles were refused entry to Troyes when they bore arms in 1562.

12 AD Aube, 1B 135* (*bailliage* court), fos 94–100 (17 June 1572).

13 AD Aube, BB14, ii [Box 10], no.19 (6 Apr. 1568).

14 AD Aube, BB14, i [Box 10], no.24, 99 fos (Comporté quarter). A remarkable document; its survival in the local archive suggests it was never sent to the Crown, perhaps superseded by the success of other means of appeal.

15 AD Aube, BB14, i [Box 10], no.24, 11r. It is likely the authorities chose to delete this provocative statement.

emphasize the continuing obedience to the Crown, despite opposition to its pacification policy, in contrast to rebellious Huguenots.

By April 1572, the location of the site of worship was still a major point of contention as expressed in quite emotive and dramatic language in the deliberations of the cathedral chapter. Services had recently begun to be held at nearby Isles, belonging to Marie de Clèves, fiancée of the Huguenot leader Henri, prince de Condé. The chapter asserted that 'in order to warn about the temerity and presumption of the Huguenots preaching at the site' representation needed to be made to the royal authorities 'against the fury and rebellion of the Huguenots to avoid the present sedition, murders already occurring and other greater inconveniences that are being prepared and which may yet come.'¹⁶ The town council was more cautious in its use of language, but vehemently supported sending a delegation to the Crown.¹⁷ The year before, the commissioners sent to enforce the 1570 edict, after consultation with both faiths, produced twenty-three articles that sought to lessen tensions. They reveal the existing pressure points over the location of services, the overt displays or rejection of devotions and attacks on the clergy. Articles 2 and 3 outline how each side should behave, with Catholics not to 'attack by deed or words coming or going from the places where the exercise of the religion is permitted nor while attending the service in the places allowed' and 'those of the religion to conduct themselves modestly, avoiding all occasion for suspicion and unrest'.¹⁸ Other articles forbid harassment of the Huguenots and searches of their homes as well as proscribing psalm singing and other activities that might be overheard and offend their neighbours and cause disturbances.¹⁹

Offences by word or deed form a familiar backdrop to confessional tensions and psalm singing was a recurring issue. On 6 March 1566, it was reported to the town council 'that several inhabitants of this town are much scandalized by Berny and his servants singing psalms publicly and out loud, which is directly in contravention of the king's edicts'. Pierre Berny, a joiner, was said to have confirmed 'very arrogantly that it was true'; his refusal to comply was subsequently reported to royal officials.²⁰ Unauthorized services within Troyes itself, including the singing of psalms, and the 'great arrogance' of the Huguenots when challenged, also feature in an investigation in 1567.²¹ Just prior to the massacres, in early August 1572, the wife of royal sergeant at the *Châtelet*, Claude Gaulard, was allegedly arrested because her young daughter was overheard psalm singing.²² Sergeant Gaulard would be one of those murdered in the prison the following month. Such episodes reinforced the identification of the Huguenots as defiant rebels and disturbers of the public peace, even those whose office was to uphold it.

In May 1572, the most prominent of the Huguenots were visited in their homes to forbid them from attending services at Isles, including later victims Christophe Ludot and Jean Hanard, but many chose to ignore the prohibition and some imprisonments resulted.²³ The Crown and governor Guise had challenged the marquise d'Isles's right to hold services, because

16 AD Aube, G1286, fos 317r (28 Apr. 1572), 355r (6 Aug.). The chapter was also in dispute with the marquise over seizure of church lands at Isles (now Isle-Aumont), 315r (23 Apr.), as was the chapter at Saint-Étienne regarding the use of nearby woods: 06G 29*, fos. 15r (29 July), 30v (4 Sept.). As with Ménilson, it is unclear whether these disputes were exacerbated by or pursued because of tensions over the services.

17 AD Aube, A17 [Box 173], fo. 203 (27 Apr.), the phrase 'empescher l'entreprise des presches' is crossed out.

18 BnF, Mss Dupuy 428, fos 68–73 (16 Mar. 1571); AD Aube, BB14, ii [Box 10], nos 35 (8 Mar.), 39–40 (Nov.).

19 J. Foa, 'An unequal apportionment: the conflict over space between Protestants and Catholics at the beginning of the Wars of Religion', *Fr Hist*, 20 (2006), esp. 382.

20 AD Aube, A15 [Box 172], 120–1 (6 Mar. 1566); Berny reported absent in 1563: BB14, i [Box 10], no.24, fo. 9r; M. Greengrass, 'Language and conflict in the French Wars of Religion', in *Ireland, 1641: Contexts and Reactions*, ed. M. Ó Stochrú and J. Ohlmeyer (Manchester, 2013), esp. 205–6 on disrespectful language.

21 AD Aube, BB14 [Box 10], ii, nos 13–14 (4 May and 1 July 1567); A15 [Box 172], 270 (8 May); Roberts, *A City in Conflict*, 206.

22 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii, 681–2 [fo. 364v]; Gaulard was absent in 1563, AD Aube, BB14, i [Box 10], no.24, fo. 64; he later presented Antoine Ménilson's protest to the authorities, no.47 (7 Apr. 1565).

23 AD Aube, BB14, ii [Box 10], no.41 (1 May 1572), the document is heavily stained, but mostly legible; no.43 (29 May), order to release prisoners; Hanard's defiant response in 1563, BB14, i [Box 10], no.24, fo. 4r.

of the disruption caused, but she appealed for the right to do so when she was in attendance.²⁴ Meanwhile, in July, the town council renewed its protest to the Crown about ‘the great dangers and inconveniences’ that could arise, electing Pierre Belin and Nicolas de La Ferté from among their number to take their remonstrances directly to Paris; further royal letters followed.²⁵ However, Protestant sources report that tensions continued to escalate, culminating on 10 August with an assault that resulted in the death of a newly baptized infant being carried from Isles in the arms of its wetnurse, forcing both sides to act.²⁶ It was not at all unusual for the faiths to send delegations to court to resolve disputes and this was the outcome here. Both the Huguenot representative, Antoine Huyart, who was making the case to the king via Admiral Coligny that this was a clear breach of the edict of pacification, and the councillor Pierre Belin, sent by the town council originally to secure the injunction against the services, were, therefore, in Paris at the time of the massacre. Huyart would be lucky to escape with his life, while Belin was said to have ensured that the violence would be extended to his fellow citizens.

Set in a broader context, we can see how tensions over the impact of allowing or preventing Reformed services in the vicinity of the town, the anxieties on both sides and entrenched beliefs about what the other side were capable of or might attempt, were based on past experience but also present fears. The erosion of trust had taken place over more than a decade. Once certain concessions were granted, there were further concerns about retaliation and the need to ‘finish the job’, to ensure that gains were not eroded or more ground lost. Furthermore, while Catholics were concerned about the impact of troops in the suburbs of Troyes and the enemy within its gates, Huguenots were just as fearful of the threat to them from neighbours and members of the militia who were supposed to guard the town and keep all inhabitants from harm. Their efforts to continue with their worship was seen as an act of defiance, of betrayal, a threat to the public peace and to peaceful coexistence, an affront to God and to the Crown. This was the atmosphere in which the arrival of news of a massacre could only exacerbate existing tensions.

II

In analysing the primary sources that we have, it is tempting to integrate them into a coherent account of events in Troyes, but it is also instructive to examine where confessional memoirs both concur and conflict and the subtle differences in between. On the Protestant side, they include the anonymous manuscript account of an alleged eyewitness, which seems to have served as the basis for that of the historian of the Reform in Troyes, Nicolas Pithou, and consequently for one of our principal sources for the massacres in France, chronicler Simon Goulart.²⁷ By the time of the massacre, Pithou and his family were living elsewhere in the region, at Brienne, after they had their property pillaged during the third war. He was, therefore, reliant on second- or third-hand reports, although he would have spoken directly to survivors, such as his brother-in-law Christophe de Vassan and probably Antoine Huyart. Pithou is clearly drawing from the eyewitness account, repeating some of the same phrases, but he also gives it a different emphasis to suit his narrative, reflecting his own local knowledge, alliances and animosities. In addition, his version is interwoven with three detailed stories of providential intervention that saved the lives of himself, Huyart, who was caught up in the aftermath in Paris, and a local minister. They are quite disruptive to the account of events in Troyes itself and, unlike the eyewitness and Goulart,

24 BB14, ii [Box 10], no.43 (29 May 1572), Guise to the mayor and aldermen.

25 AD Aube, A17 [Box 173], fo. 222 (23 July); BB14, ii [Box 10], no.45 (24 and 31 July).

26 BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, 67v; Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 684–6 [fos 367–8r]; S. Goulart, *Mémoires de l'estat de France sous Charles IX* (Meidelbourg, 1576–77), i. 346–7. A Huguenot joiner was also badly injured.

27 The anonymous account: BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fos 65–75, ‘Moi estant dedans troies’; Pithou, *Chronique*; *Mémoires de l'estat de France*, i, 456, ‘following the memoirs given to us by faithful people ... word for word’.

draw our attention away from the victims to the survivors and how they perhaps came to terms with why they were saved while others were not. In one short folio, Pithou mentions his 'miraculous escape', the 'singular providence of God', the 'even greater providence of God' and how by the grace of God he and his family were saved from 'the paws of these murderers' as they fled towards the border.²⁸ Even so, he describes the potential more than actual risks of their flight, such as a fortuitous wrong turning and the diversion of their potential attackers. Nevertheless, it must still have been a terrifying journey whatever their trust in divine protection.

There is much that is plausible in the Protestant accounts, in view of what we know from other sources about these events and those in other provincial towns, and some details can be verified. Contemporary Catholic memoirs corroborate the massacre by the prison guards and other acts of violence, but, while specific about the number of victims, are vague in identifying them or the perpetrators. Poncelet Meusnier, a head of the watch who in 1563 had expressed uncompromising opposition to Huguenot services, mentions forty-seven prisoners having their throats cut by 'the executioner' and being buried on the morning of 4 September, with several other 'huguenots and huguenottes' killed in the streets on the same day, with most soon after professing the Catholic faith.²⁹ Jehan Bonjour comments as much on events in Paris as in Troyes, but states that, on Monday 1 September, 'the town's judges, accompanied by several sergeants' arrested Huguenots in their homes, from where forty-nine were either taken to 'the royal prison' or murdered in the streets. At 7am on the Thursday, the prisoners were killed by 'some soldiers' sent to guard them and buried in a ditch.³⁰ The number of reported victims in Troyes is relatively small when compared with other major towns such as Rouen and Lyon where there were claimed to be 150 plus, or in Meaux where there were more than 200, however, they are all named in the Protestant accounts and, therefore, their histories are traceable.³¹ Most were prominent Huguenots who had previously come to the attention of the authorities. It is notable that only one woman was recorded as a victim and there seemed to have been far less ritual killing than described elsewhere and, indeed, during earlier episodes of violence in and near Troyes. Nevertheless, Goulart and accounts of the massacres in other towns echo some of the details, including the round up and execution of prisoners, the central role of an armed gang, the withholding of royal letters, mass burials, the extension of arrests to villages roundabout and the many subsequent abjurations.³²

Antoine Huyart, sieur de Presles, was lieutenant general to the *bailliage* of Isles, site of the services, and part of a close network of notable Huguenot families reinforced by kin associations.³³ Huyart's story of surviving the massacre is a familiar account of risk and intrigue as he and his companions sought refuge with a series of friends and relatives in Paris, having to move on when their hosts became fearful for their own safety. Given such desperate circumstances, they became easy targets for exploitation, as Huyart found in the household of Charles des Boves, servant of the duc de Guise, where guards demanded payment to protect him.³⁴ Huyart

28 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 696–9 [fo. 372].

29 [Poncelet Meusnier], 'Poncelet Meusnier et Jacques de Brienne. Premiers chroniqueurs Troyens', *Revue de Champagne et de Brie*, 14 (1883), 50; BnF, Mss Collection de Champagne 61, fos 75v, 87v–8r; AD Aube, BB14, i [Box 10], no.24, fo. 53r.

30 M. Corrad de Breban, 'Extraits d'un registre domestique, tenu par Jehan Bonjour le jeune, notaire ès-foires de Champagne, à Troyes', *Annuaire de l'Aube* (1840), 60–1.

31 N. Z. Davis, 'The rites of violence: religious riot in sixteenth-century France', *Past and Present*, 59 (1973), 80. For their histories, Roberts, *A City in Conflict*, 150–1, and the impact on their families, 153–4.

32 *Mémoires de l'état de France*, i. 435–563: massacre of prisoners (Meaux, Bourges, Lyon, Rouen), armed gangs (Meaux, Bourges, Lyon), royal letters (Bourges, Lyon), mass burials (Meaux, Rouen), arrests in villages (Meaux, Orleans).

33 Antoine Ménilson was related to both Huyart and Pithou through marriage as his wife, Isabeau, was the sister of Jacques de Marisy (Huyart's brother-in-law) and of Pithou's half-sister's husband, Claude de Marisy. Other relatives included the Vassan, Le Duchat and Le Tartrier. Members of these families had all served in prominent roles on the town council, including as mayor, before their exclusion for their faith.

34 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 690–4 [fos. 369v–71r], reports that Pierre Belin sent his cronies after Huyart; S. Carroll, *Martyrs and Murderers: the Guise Family and the Making of Europe* (Oxford, 2009), 218, identifies des Boves.

ended up in the *Châtelet* prison, from where he eventually escaped, and was ultimately saved by a monk who insisted that he convert until he could return safely to Troyes. Despite this harrowing ordeal, Huyart might well have reflected on his recurring good fortune in defying death. During the first war, he was implicated in the 1562 plot to seize the town, but managed to evade arrest and imprisonment until January 1563. He was included on the *parlement's* list of suspects, but managed to delay going to trial and to avoid the violence against his fellow prisoners and was subsequently freed by virtue of the edict of pacification. On behalf of his coreligionists, he went to court to seek confirmation of the Huguenots' right to worship in the suburbs of Troyes in 1563, as he did for Isles in 1572.³⁵ In October 1568, at the beginning of the third war, he was replaced in office, but was back as a Huguenot representative in March 1571. On the list of those banned from attending services at Isles in May 1572, he appealed that the duties of his office required his frequent presence on the marquise's estates making observation of the prohibition difficult.³⁶

Pithou reports that, shortly before the massacre in Paris, Huyart had obtained confirmation of the judicial redress for the death of the newly baptized infant being carried back from Isles.³⁷ The incident is only reported in Protestant sources and might appear to be an event of only passing local interest. However, according to Simon Goulart, it takes us not only to Paris on the eve of the massacre, but also into the bedchamber of the wounded Admiral Coligny when the king and queen mother came to visit. Goulart states that an eyewitness had informed him that Coligny had raised violations of the edict with the king and cited the Troyes incident specifically.³⁸ There is no direct corroboration of this, but Coligny had written to his wife on 18 August 1572 to say that he would be staying on after the wedding to raise such infractions with the king despite his own preference to return and the warnings of his followers: 'the king has assured and promised me to resolve several complaints from various places in this kingdom regarding breaches of the Edict.'³⁹ Goulart also provides the most coherent and succinct account and seizes the significance of events in the context of the long-running conflict in Troyes over the location of sites and the national resonance with the infringement of the edicts that threatened the future of confessional peace. The significance of the war of attrition over the services was both symbolic and actual, with both sides prepared to continue the fight to seek a resolution in their favour. As the royal letters of 28 and 30 August, forbidding any further bloodshed and ordering that the Huguenots remain unmolested in their homes, were read out on the day after the prison massacre, it is Goulart who places in the mouth of the *bailli* Anne de Vaudrey, 'And no services!', reinforcing the ultimate victory. Catholic notary Jehan Bonjour echoes these sentiments in his account, 'and so ceased the *presches* at Isles.'⁴⁰ Indeed, the royal declaration identified services as a primary cause of conflict and specified their suspension, 'in order to avoid the troubles, scandals, suspicion and defiance' which could occur, until peace was restored.⁴¹

The 'official' record of municipal deliberations and the correspondence to and from office-holders can offset and challenge the confessional chronicles and memoirs which contain much more detail, but are harder to verify. However, these official documents are full of silences about the massacres themselves. Of course, all of the sources are biased and present a partial and selective version of events. While reported speech is prominent in the Protestant descriptions of the

35 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 507–10 [fos 275–6r]; 519–20 [fo. 281r]; 535–6 [fo. 289r]; 607–8 [fos 324v–5r] is often subtly critical of Huyart, reporting that some said he bribed his way out of prison in 1563, the confirmation letters acquired that May were subsequently lost and not recovered until 1566, and the account of his 'miraculous' escape in 1572 strongly implies that he converted in order to survive.

36 AD Aube, BB14, ii [Box 10], no.41 (1 May 1572).

37 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 686–7 [fo. 368r]; the declaration also lifted prohibitions against the services at Isles.

38 *Mémoires de l'estat de France*, i. 376.

39 BnF, Mss Fr. nouvelles acquisitions 5214, fo. 140 (18 Aug. 1572); *Mémoires de l'estat de France*, i. 356.

40 *Mémoires de l'estat de France*, i. 456, 'Et point de presche!'; Breban, 'Extraits d'un registre domestique', 61.

41 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 706–7 [fo. 377]; Mingous, 'Forging memory'.

brave, defiant and steadfast victims and the vilification of the perpetrators and those who gave the orders, much is inevitably lost of private conversations and from the minutes of meetings. Nevertheless, a reconstruction of the days before, during and after the massacre in Troyes is possible by piecing together what we can from the surviving documentation.

III

In the days following the beginning of the massacre in Paris, Protestant sources state that conflicting verbal reports began to arrive at the gates of Troyes.⁴² The messengers notably included Philippe de Volvire, baron de Ruffec, who had ridden in haste from Paris to spread the news and, it was said, encourage the extension of the violence.⁴³ On Wednesday 27 August, a meeting of the town council attended by royal officials was told that the bishop had received letters from Paris that morning about ‘what had happened last Sunday’, confirmed by others from the count of Brienne, and that ‘it was necessary ... to provide for the guard and security of the town.’⁴⁴ After discussion, the council agreed to write to governor Guise ‘to know the will of his majesty and the order that he [Guise] would be pleased to make’. In the meantime, a royal ordinance was reissued to prevent unrest and sedition, including a curfew, armed guards and the provision of water outside each house in case of fire. All of this seems to have been done very much on the hoof, since the hours for the curfew order are left blank. Two days later, there were two meetings of the council to make further provision for the town’s security. At the first, the mayor reported that *bailli* Vaudrey had requested a company of twelve armed men ‘of good status’ to accompany him through the town, so as to restore order in the event of ‘emotion or scandal’. After deliberation, it was suggested that the *bailli* should seek archers to assist him at the town’s expense.⁴⁵ In addition, two guards were to be provided in the part of town where the wealthier inhabitants resided and at the townhall from midday to evening the night watch should continue, but otherwise no firearms were to be carried. This was to be maintained, it was stated, until the king’s and governor’s will was known.

Sometime between 30 August and 1 September, Protestant and Catholic accounts concur that some forty Huguenots were taken from their homes in Troyes to the town’s prison and that several more of their coreligionists were killed in the streets in the days before and after.⁴⁶ A procession of thanksgiving for the royal victory ‘against the enemies of the church, the Catholic faith, the French Crown and disturbers of the public peace’ was organized by the cathedral chapter to take place on Sunday 31 August.⁴⁷ The town council minutes of that day focus on keeping the town secure and, ‘following the tenor of the missives’ sent by governor Guise on the 27th, extending this provision to its suburbs.⁴⁸ Some captains and their lieutenants were summoned by the council to appear later in the day to receive instructions to this effect. In a separate commission dated 1 September, others were ordered to seize Huguenots in the suburbs and bring them to justice ‘without harming them’ in accordance with the will of the king and the governor.⁴⁹ This is the only direct evidence of an order from the council to arrest the Huguenots prior to the prison massacre

42 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 694 [fo. 371r], claims the news first arrived on 26 Aug.

43 BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fo. 70v; Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 695–6 [fos 371v–2r], amid several corrections of this passage, he describes Ruffec as ‘gouverneur d’Angoulême’, a title he did not assume until 1573.

44 AD Aube, A17 [Box 173], fos 225–6r (27 Aug. 1572).

45 AD Aube, A17 [Box 173], fos 227–8r (29 Aug. 1572); it seems that the *bailli* did not have his demands fully met and there was possibly some tension between the municipal and royal authorities in this regard.

46 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 699 [fo. 373r], for 30 Aug.; Breban, ‘Extraits d’un registre domestique’, 61, for 1 Sept.

47 AD Aube, G1286, reg.280, fo. 363r (29 Aug. 1572).

48 AD Aube, A17 [Box 173], fos 228v–9r (31 Aug.).

49 AD Aube, BB14, ii [Box 10], no.49 (1 Sept.).

and suggests that the letters from Guise probably contained that instruction. Again, there is general consensus that the prisoners were killed in cold blood by their guards on the morning of Thursday 4 September, and the royal letters and declaration that might have saved them was supposedly published the next day on the 5th.

Subsequent council meetings on 8 and 10 September focused once again on the security of Troyes. For an external audience, as a letter from the governor of nearby Langres testified, the authorities claimed that the town was ‘peaceful and secure both inside and out.’⁵⁰ Meanwhile, on 6 September, the deliberations of the chapter of Saint Étienne record that deputies were to be sent to the *bailli* regarding ‘some Huguenots hidden in some of the houses in the cloister’ and requesting that a search be made.⁵¹ The first mention of ‘those of the so-called reformed religion’, and their earlier detention, in the town council register itself is on 18 September, when it was reported that some were still ‘hidden and concealed in some houses in the town, who were not found during the search made by the king’s judges and officials ... and those keeping and hiding them in their homes have to present and deliver them to justice or declare where they are.’⁵² The council agreed to consult with these same royal officials, including the *bailli*, about what should be done in accordance, once again, with the will of the king and governor. Evidently, the council now felt more confident about recording this search, while still attributing it to royal officers and, thus, authorized by the Crown. The reference to bringing them ‘to justice’ is chilling given the fate of their coreligionists two weeks earlier. Notable also is the council’s concern with preventing nocturnal pillage and theft which had become a daily occurrence, suggesting that, despite their best efforts, order had broken down. Many abjurations reportedly followed both in private and in public at the cathedral of Saint Pierre, although no official record of these survives.⁵³

The reticence of the municipal record indicates a cautious approach by the council about what was written down about its proceedings, as earlier reflected in a separate register ‘of the time of the last troubles’ kept between October 1567 and April 1568, during the second war and later in the destruction of those kept during the period of Catholic League control.⁵⁴ In 1572, the council members were waiting for clarification of what they should do amid conflicting messages, but were perhaps also stalling for time. What is unclear is whether orders were given to kill the prisoners or the guards took the law into their own hands. Fear of retribution or admonition may have played a part in the delay given that earlier imprisonments had led to release and favourable terms from the monarchy. The killings may have been opportunistic, but in other towns such as Rouen they took place weeks later, perhaps revealing the powerlessness of the Crown to intervene and uphold its declarations. Amid the continuing uncertainty, as it awaited further instruction from the king and governor, on 3 September the council sought confirmation of ‘the will of their majesties ... so as to conduct themselves according to their will and command for the preservation and public repose, tuition and defence of the town, the said letters being addressed to Messrs de Chaulsepierre and Controller Pierre d’Aubeterre, who are presently in the city of Paris.’⁵⁵ It is therefore clear that the council had taken the initiative of sending these two aldermen sometime after report of the massacre. Both were present in the

50 AD Aube, BB14, ii [Box 10], no.51 (8 Sept.).

51 AD Aube, 06G 29*, reg.1006, fo. 31r (6 Sept. 1572).

52 AD Aube, A17 [Box 173], fo. 233v.

53 The main source for this is Pithou, *Chronique*, ii, 744–53 [fos 392v–6], clearly appalled, not just by the scale of the conversions, but that when the pressure to conform eased, most chose to remain in the Catholic Church. His reflections also reveal the continuing Protestant distrust in the authorities after the massacres.

54 AD Aube, A16, filling the gap in A15 which covers 1565–1569 [both Box 172]; Mingous, ‘Forging memory’.

55 AD Aube, A17 [Box 173], fos 229v–30r (3 Sept. 1572). None of the other sources mention this delegation.

council chamber when the news first arrived on 27 August and for a few days after.⁵⁶ Neither was recorded as present between 31 August and 8 September, although their mission was probably overtaken by events in Troyes and the return of councillor Pierre Belin. Their absence might be surprising given the arrival of letters from Guise and Belin, both written on the 27th, and of the royal declaration of the 28th, and therefore quite likely to have reached Troyes before their departure. Nevertheless, confusion remained for the authorities, caught between contradictory orders for preventative measures and prompts to more decisive action.

This confusion was doubtless fuelled by communications from Paris from councillor Belin. On 27 August 1572, he wrote to the mayor that, having already sent news regarding how ‘things have gone’, he could report that they were continuing still ‘with his majesty’s decision to finish off the extermination of the religious’ following their conspiracy against the Crown.⁵⁷ He confirmed that the council would have received letters to that effect and from the baron de Ruffec regarding the king’s intention ‘not only there but throughout the kingdom’, while governor Guise had told him of the order to guard the gates and other security measures. He signed off by saying that once he had spoken further with Guise he would return and ‘tell you the truth of what I know about these affairs’. According to Pithou, Belin left Paris on 30 or 31 August, in order to countermand the king’s orders that he carried with him, arriving back in Troyes on 3 September between 3 and 4 pm in time to speak to the *bailli*. It was claimed that he had entered the council chamber and relayed orders from governor Guise that, ‘they should kill as soon as possible, as in Paris and elsewhere, all the Huguenots and rebels against the king that they could capture’. Supposedly the shocked moderates on the town council withdrew on hearing this news, leaving just the *bailli* and five or six others in charge.⁵⁸ Others said that the order was first relayed not by Belin but by ‘a certain bishop’, and that the bodies of the Huguenots were to be displayed with a sign around their necks reading ‘the seditious and rebels to the king who conspired against his majesty’. Pithou was ‘bien certain’ that Belin was the messenger, but that the *bailli* should not have listened to him and instead carried out the royal orders.

However, the archives contain a letter from Belin to the mayor, sent from Paris on 1 September, indicating that he was still there, but intending to return very soon. Troyes is approximately 100 miles or 160km from Paris, so would take two to three days to reach. It is therefore possible that Belin was there on 3 September in time for the council meeting, but he was likely to have arrived later in the day or the following morning when the massacre in the prison supposedly took place. In fact, his presence is not recorded at a council meeting until 10 September when he claimed additional expenses to cover the costs he had incurred for medication and treatment of his fellow delegate, Nicolas de La Ferté, who had fallen ill and died while they were in Paris.⁵⁹ It is possible that Belin sent orders directly to the *bailli* that were carried out under his instruction,

56 Aubeterre on 29 Aug. (also in attendance 8 and 10 Sept.), Chaulsepierre (Simon de Vitel) on 31 Sept. Like Pierre Belin, Aubeterre was appointed to replace a Protestant councillor in 1562: AD Aube, A17 [Box 173], fos 247v–9r (18 Sept.). Pithou blamed Aubeterre for the arrest of his friend Christophe Ludot, who sought refuge with his in-law and neighbour, but was betrayed to the authorities by him: Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 699–700 [fo. 373]; *Mémoires de l'état de France*, i. 443–4. There may be a political aspect to this as well since, in the 1580s, Aubeterre was one of those who admitted the Guise to Troyes, whereas Claude Jaquot, who supposedly tried to save Ludot, was a royalist. Aubeterre would later be expelled by the league, as would Ludot’s widow who remained in Troyes after his death. Ludot’s house was broken into twice in 1560s and his young daughters, terrorized by soldiers, tipped off by Aubeterre’s wife, Ludot’s cousin: Pithou, *Chronique*, i. 488–91 [fos 265–6].

57 AD Aube, BB14, ii [Box 10], no.47: Belin uses an interesting expression, ‘de faire fin a extermynier **les religieux**’ (my emphasis), which is often wrongly cited as ‘ceux de la religion’, the more usual term. Guise, writing to the sieur de Rancé, colonel of Champagne, on 31 Aug., also mentions the ‘sudden anger’ of the king following the discovery of the conspiracy against him, but that the most recent royal declaration had tempered the original rigour of his orders to act against the ‘rebels’: BnF, Mss Dupuy 428, fo. 78; Mingous, ‘Forging memory’.

58 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 709–11 [fos 378–9r]; BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fo. 72v. The council register indicates a fairly regular pattern of attendance in the days leading up to the massacre and nothing conclusive with regard to those who supported the council’s actions and those who did not: AD Aube, A17 [Box 173].

59 AD Aube, A17 [Box 173], fos 231v–2 (10 Sept.).

but there is no surviving evidence that there was any official order or sign off for the murders. It is clear that Belin was having difficulty getting access to governor Guise in Paris, but was in the meantime receiving packets from the mayor and *bailli*. So both sides were kept well-informed by the other, despite the apparent confusion about the direction of royal policy.

IV

We know a great deal from Pithou and other Protestant sources about those whom they blamed for instigating the 1572 massacre. Pithou had no doubt that ‘les deux Belins’, Pierre and Philippe, played a prominent role in events, describing them as ‘sworn enemies [of the Huguenots] and ... the principal authors and advisors of the massacres that took place in the prison.’⁶⁰ The Belins several times acted in conjunction with one another, over a period of more than twenty years, both in opposing the Huguenots and in supporting the Catholic League. As councillor, *échevin* (alderman) and then mayor, Pierre was a leading figure in the municipal council of Troyes from at least September 1562 when he began to appear regularly in the list of those attending its meetings. As mayor for two years from 1570 to June 1572, he had only recently stepped down at the time of the massacre, being replaced by his colleague Pierre Nevelet with whom, judging by their correspondence, he had a close relationship, signing off ‘your humble and affectionate brother and friend.’⁶¹ Belin would be elected mayor once again from 1576–8, and clearly commanded the respect of his fellow councillors, also being sent on various delegations over the years to the governor or the court to represent the town’s interests. He was, therefore, a man of considerable influence and standing and his word was both trusted and believed. Both he and Philippe would be elected to represent Troyes’ third estate at the Estates General of 1576 and were key players in local support for the Catholic League in 1580s.

However, other sources provide a very different portrait of Pierre Belin. Tensions with the Huguenots were unsurprising given his role in opposing the services and representing the town in their efforts to suppress them.⁶² In 1567, he was a witness in the investigation into clandestine services in the rue de la Grande Tannerie where he faced hostility from the Huguenot host.⁶³ He also clashed directly with Nicolas Pithou, who claimed that he tried to discredit him by making false accusations, but the antipathy was mutual.⁶⁴ While having first been appointed as a councillor to replace Protestants excluded from office in 1562, Belin must nevertheless as mayor have presided over their reintegration in 1571. In 1577, he was described as one of ‘the most seditious’ by the deputies of Johann Casimir in a remonstrance to the king regarding the violation of his edicts and election of such figures as mayors. Nevertheless, a later marginal note exonerates him as having ‘in his time rendered good service to the town of Troyes’, dismissing the accusations against him as a ‘baseless calumny.’⁶⁵ Pierre Belin’s presence in Paris at the time of the massacre and his role in liaising with the authorities back in Troyes about the direction of royal policy, as well as his reputation for vindictive actions against the Huguenots, all suggest that he was a key influence in how events unfolded. However, as we have seen, his role may not have been as direct as Pithou and others claim.

Philippe Belin was a less prominent figure in 1572 for most commentators. He served as *lieutenant particulier* to the royal *bailliage* for several decades from 1548–87 and, therefore, worked

60 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 810 (1576) [fo. 423r]; also 816 (1577) [fo. 425v] for negative verses against ‘les deux Belins’. It seems likely they were related, but this is never mentioned either by supporters or opponents.

61 AD Aube, BB14, ii [Box 10], nos 47 and 50 (27 Aug. and 1 Sept. 1572).

62 AD Aube, A14 [Box 171], fo. 11 (20 Apr. 1563); A17 [Box 173], fos 203 (27 Apr. 1572), 222 (23 July).

63 AD Aube, BB14, ii [Box 10], no.14 (1 July 1567), Belin was recently appointed commissioner for this quarter.

64 Pithou, *Chronique*, i. 380–1 [fos 211v–12r]; also i. 470 [fos 255v–6r].

65 BnF, Mss Dupuy 428, fo. 91 (1577); Pithou, *Chronique*, i. 353 [fo. 198r] and *Mémoires de l’estat de France*, i. 448, refer to Belin as ‘seditious’. Other marginalia describe two Jacobin preachers who openly threatened Huguenots as ‘neither factious nor seditious’; one was the ‘most famous and renowned’ Desrieulx, noted for his seditious sermons: Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 534–5 [fo. 288v].

closely with Anne de Vaudrey, *bailli* from 1559 to 1578. As a royal lieutenant, he was also one of the founding members of the *siège présidial*, established in 1552 alongside the prominent Protestant officials Antoine Huyart, Jacques de Pleurre and Jean Postel (all listed as suspects by the *Parlement* in 1563).⁶⁶ Like Pierre Belin, he was often selected to represent the town, including at the Estates General in both 1560 and 1576. His contemporary, Nicolas Pithou, made many negative comments about him as an ‘enemy of the religion’ and, in relation to the siting of services, ‘blinded by a foolish arrogance, made it universally known that, if there was any site of worship in the town or its suburbs, he would leave it altogether.’⁶⁷ Along with Thomas Bazin, lieutenant general, Pithou claimed that Philippe Belin was one of the *bailli*’s closest advisers, that they were both in attendance at the council deliberations on 3 September and, therefore, complicit in the decision to kill the Huguenot prisoners. He and Bazin were also said to have signed the supposed authorization or ‘warrant’ as a reassurance to the killers which was later carelessly dropped in the street and retrieved, providing evidence of complicity.⁶⁸ In accordance with his office, Philippe Belin occasionally attended town council meetings, alongside other royal officials, including on 27 August 1572 to hear the first reports from Paris and subsequent orders to guard the town. However, there is no record of his attendance thereafter, including on 3 September. It is noteworthy that lieutenant Belin had a warm relationship with both the cathedral and Saint-Étienne chapters, as a generous and pious benefactor including sizeable loans he had made and a gift of wine he had received in 1572 for the ‘pleasure he has given the church.’⁶⁹

Likewise, despite the prominence given by the Huguenots to *bailli* Anne de Vaudrey’s role in events, there are few other documents that provide much insight on this. A surviving letter by him, written to the municipal authorities on 14 August 1572, informs us that he was ill and resting on his estates.⁷⁰ We next hear only indirectly from the *bailli*, in his request to the council for assistance on 29 August. He does not seem to have been present at any of the conciliar deliberations, including those on 3 September.⁷¹ Nevertheless, Protestant sources attribute to him the vital orders sending town officials to all quarters with the express command to take all those of the religion to prison, as well as those to captains Perrenet, who led the massacre, and Villiers, who led the round-up of Huguenots in the surrounding region.⁷² As the leading royal official, the *bailli* would have been expected to carry out the king and governor’s orders to confine those likely to be sympathetic to the supposed Huguenot conspiracy and it is clear that others approached him about the searches for suspects. A sustained and consistent opposition to the Huguenots and their activities, including early allegiance to the Catholic League, certainly reinforces the suspicion that he was closely involved in orchestrating the killings of 1572, but there is no unequivocal evidence to support this. Like the Belins, Pithou sees him as a ‘sworn enemy’ of the Huguenots ‘and keen to spill their blood [...] one of the most superstitious and bigoted in the region’, but admits that most Catholics saw him as driven by an ‘ardent zeal and singular affection’ for the Catholic Church.⁷³ It is unsurprising that royal officials were blamed for the

66 Breban, ‘Extraits d’un registre domestique’, 56. On 1563, Roberts, *A City in Conflict*, 204–5; lieutenant Belin was involved in arranging witnesses to be sent to Paris: AD Aube, BB14, i [Box 10], no.22 (Dec. 1562).

67 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 533–4 [fo. 288r].

68 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 711, 713 [fos 379r, 380r] is the only source to make these claims directly; *Mémoires de l’état de France*, i. 449–50, while describing the vicious character of Philippe Belin, does not mention Bazin; BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fo. 73r. The authorization was supposedly shown to the prisoners before their execution.

69 AD Aube, 06G 29^e, reg.1006, fo. 10r (15 July 1572); G1286, reg.280, fos 379r (15 Oct.), 386r (5 Nov.).

70 AD Aube, BB14, ii [Box 10], no.46 (14 Aug. 1572).

71 Indeed, the register of the *bailliage* records that he was presiding over cases on that day, as well as on 27 and 30 Aug. and 1 Sept.: AD Aube, 1B 896^e, fos 32–8r.

72 BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fos 72–3r; Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 699, 704–5, 710–13 [fos 373r, 375, 379–80r]; *Mémoires de l’état de France*, i. 450–2.

73 Pithou, *Chronique*, i. 283–6 [fos 162–3]; ii. 849 [fo. 445v], describes Vaudrey’s death in 1579, rejecting the administration of preachers Desrieux and Le Tartrier as ‘hypocrites and apostates’. His son, Georges, would succeed him as *bailli*, but would later be expelled by the league.

more severe measures against the Huguenots, and it is not possible to gauge whether they were simply responding to the orders given to them or proactively imposing harsher restrictions. It is likely, however, that they could have done more to protect the Huguenots from arbitrary violence and harassment, including pillage of their possessions. Catholic and Protestant sources conflict as to whether in 1572 pillage of Huguenot properties was, if not encouraged, actively prevented by the *bailli*.⁷⁴

Mayor Pierre Nevelet, who presided over the council meetings and had been a councillor alongside Pierre Belin from early 1560s, was not believed, even by Protestant commentators, to have been complicit in ordering the massacre. Indeed, Pithou states that he 'otherwise was quite a good person', although he supposedly tried to mislead the authorities over the infant's death by claiming that it was stillborn.⁷⁵ By contrast, Bishop Claude de Bauffremont, who presided over the diocese for over thirty years from 1562 to 1593 throughout the period of the wars, is given a sinister role by Protestant authors, claiming that he brought together a gang of his own to kill the Huguenots, but that it was mainly intent on pillaging rich households.⁷⁶ His only appearance in the municipal record, however, is having been the first to have received the official news from Paris. The bishop would also have authorized the procession of thanksgiving on 31 August. It is no surprise that the clergy was vehemently opposed to the presence of Huguenots in the town and even more so to the exercise of their worship, most notably the chapters of the cathedral and of Saint-Étienne. Many, including Bishop Bauffremont, signed the 1568 oath of the league, although he was largely absent during its domination of Troyes during his last years of office.⁷⁷ A strikingly unusual example of clerical involvement in the events surrounding the massacre, both Protestant and ecclesiastical sources record the rebellious behaviour of a canon at Saint-Étienne, Tubeuf, known as captain de Villiers, who, having been authorized with his troop to seize Huguenots up to fifteen leagues around Troyes, went on to plunder estates and to demand payments and ransoms from Catholics as well.⁷⁸ The cathedral chapter gathered information 'on the exactions and pillage made by him and his accomplices' on church lands, and demands were made that he should be stripped of his clerical offices, given his actions and neglect of his parish 'to the great scandal of everyone', the *bailli* and bishop be informed and Villiers tried by the secular courts.⁷⁹

Like Villiers, it is no surprise to discover that the supposed leaders of the massacre in the prison, Jean Perrenet and Jean Mergéy, as well as several of their followers, had form, having been involved in violence against Huguenots previously, notably in the prison in 1563.⁸⁰ However, they appear to have been a somewhat motley crew, described in Protestant accounts as having been handpicked by the *bailli* as 'the most cruel' in the town and therefore 'most suitable and worthy' of their charge of executing the prisoners. Yet they were also portrayed as reluctant participants, keeping the focus on the responsibility of the main officials whom the Huguenots sought to blame.⁸¹ Their need to fortify themselves with drink and tripe before the killings, and their fights over the division of the spoils, are characteristic of such descriptions. *Bailli* Vaudrey was said to have reassured a concerned Perrenet that he had nothing to fear as it was the king's will and authorized by royal justice, but became furious and threatening when his orders were

74 Breban, 'Extraits d'un registre domestique', 61; cf BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fo. 72r.

75 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 686 [fo. 367v], on incriminatory letters supposedly intercepted and passed to Coligny.

76 BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fos 70v–1r, contains more detail about this than Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 705 [fo. 376r].

77 BnF, Mss Fr. 4737, fos 186v–8.

78 BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fos 72r, 75r, claims Villiers brought forty prisoners back to Troyes but was refused entry; Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 704–5 [fo. 375], describes his bloody death in 1577 at the hands of Protestant soldiers.

79 AD Aube, G1286, fos 371v (19 Sept. 1572), 381r (20 Oct.).

80 Roberts, *A City in Conflict*, 147. Unfortunately, their histories are not easily traced from other sources.

81 BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fos 72v–3, 75r, lists seven killers; Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 701, 711–15, 723 [fos 379–80, 383v–4r], lists nine; as do *Mémoires de l'estat de France*, i. 445–6.

not immediately carried out. The explanations for the overnight delay differ, however. While the eyewitness attributes Perrenet's hesitancy to fear of retribution, Pithou claims that Perrenet was ill and so another of the killers was given the order which he deliberately failed to pass on. In the absence of other sources, it is difficult to get past the instrumentalization of the gang members in Protestant accounts. Pithou focuses on the divine justice and righteous vengeance which lay in wait for the perpetrators who failed to heed the clear warnings to desist.⁸² This providential aspect is largely lacking in the eyewitness account, preferring celestial signs and presages rather than acts of divine judgement. Pithou places the blame squarely on local officials, whereas the eyewitness places much more emphasis on the responsibility of the duc de Guise for authorizing Pierre Belin and, therefore, Vaudrey's actions, as well as the complicity of the Crown.⁸³

V

Whoever was responsible for the massacre in Troyes in 1572, as well as the episodic violence that preceded it, the impact on the families of those who were killed was profound. In the spring of 1564, nine widows sought justice and compensation through the king's council for the murder of their husbands in Troyes and its suburbs during the first war and since the edict of pacification.⁸⁴ Pithou describes the appeal of these women direct to the Crown during the king's visit to Troyes, pleading for mercy to the queen mother and the duc d'Aumale.⁸⁵ In 1573, several widows in Troyes were listed as 'poor' in the city's tax roll for the year following the killing of their husbands.⁸⁶ Poncelet Meusnier, no friend of the Huguenots, reports that a goldsmith and a cobbler involved in an earlier robbery of the treasury at Saint-Urbain, and subsequently arrested and executed in 1574, refused to name their accomplices, declaring 'that there are already enough widows and orphans in Troyes.'⁸⁷ It would not be until 1576 that article 32 of the peace edict declared the widows and children of those killed, in whichever part of the kingdom, exempt from impositions and taxes (according to their status) for the next six years, which royal officials were ordered to ensure.⁸⁸ By then, the church in Troyes had dwindled through conversion, death or exile. Seemingly abandoned by their king and by God, ground down by the violence against them, there were insufficient Huguenot numbers to reconstitute the church or its services. The massacres of Saint Bartholomew were a pivotal and decisive event from which it would and could not recover.

82 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 723–4, 769, 773–7 [fos 384, 405, 407–8].

83 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 721–4 [fos 383–4]; BnF, Mss Dupuy 333, fos 74v–5r; Mingous, 'Forging memory'.

84 BnF, Mss Fr. 18156, fo. 40r (24 Mar. 1564).

85 Pithou, *Chronique*, ii. 552–3 [fos 296v–7r], claims a judge was imprisoned for 10–12 days for supporting them.

86 AD Aube, F247; Roberts, *A City in Conflict*, 153.

87 'Poncelet Meusnier', 51; BnF, Mss Collection de Champagne 61, fo. 88r.

88 <<http://elec.enc.sorbonne.fr/editsdepacification>>: 1576, VII. Paix de Monsieur. Édit de Paris dit de Beaulieu.