

**Guy de Brès, *Le Baston de la Foy chrestienne***

Wilhelmus H. Th. Moehn (ed.)

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This impressive erudite work is the first step in an exciting new publishing project led jointly by Wilhelmus H. Th. Moehn (Amsterdam) and Erik A. de Boer (Utrecht). The aim is to finally make available the complete works of Guy de Brès (1522–1567), the famous reformer who published the *Confession of Faith* (*Belydenisse des gheboofs*) in 1561. The project is divided into four stages (13): 1: *Le Baston de la Foy chrestienne* (in two parts); 2: *La racine, source et fondement des anabaptistes* (1565); 3: *La Confession de la foy, Oraison au seigneur, et autres écrits*; 4: *Histoire notable* (1565), *Procedures tenues* (1568). The work presented here is therefore the first in a series. Volume 1 consists of a long introduction (17–130), followed by the annotated text, with the 1577 English edition on the left-hand page and the 1555 French *first* edition (with variants up to 1558) on the right-hand page. Volume 2 includes the French editions of 1558–1565 and their variants (19). It contains several very useful appendices, including an index of biblical references (1111–1133), an index of ancient and modern authors and works (1135–1147), a glossary (1151–1152), and an impressive table of citations in the various editions (1153–1187). One can only admire the editorial work in this volume.

The introduction provides an opportunity to revisit the little-known life of Guy de Brès. Originally from Mons, he was a glass painter. After converting to Protestantism, he went into exile in England (1548) and joined the French Church in London. With no training for the pastorate and no academic system available, de Brès would have trained for the pastorate, according to Wim Moehn's hypothesis, through the 'prophecy, a weekly gathering for Bible study' (22). He then returned to the Netherlands and became a pastor in Lille between 1552 and 1556. It was from there that he published the first edition of *Le Baston de la Foy chrestienne* (1565), possibly in Antwerp (28, note 38). Faced with persecution, he went into exile again, this time to Frankfurt, Lausanne, and Geneva. It was during his two-year stay in the canton of Vaud in 1558–1559 that he modified his text, probably under the influence of Pierre Viret (29). From 1558 to 1565, various editions were published in Geneva by Thomas Courteau (31 and 38). He died in Valenciennes in 1567.

*Le Baston de la Foy chrestienne* is akin to a veritable 'anthology' ('a compendium of theology': 80), covering the major aspects of Protestant theology. The expanded editions of twenty-three chapters from February 1558 to 1565 (volume 2) cover the

following topics: God (chapter 1), Christ (2), the Holy Spirit (3), the Law (4), free will (5), justification (6), merit (7), mediation (8), the Church (9), baptism (10), confession (11), the Lord's Supper (12), Holy Scripture (13), assemblies of the faithful (14), marriage (15), vows (16), fasting (17), saints (18), images (19), purgatory (20), coercion by force (21), persecution of believers (22), and finally the power of magistrates (23). For each of these themes, Guy de Brès adopts the same method: drawing up a list of references that correspond to the theme. Thus, chapter 11 on confession begins with four quotations: Psalm 32:5, Psalm 51:5–6, Proverbs 28:13, and 1 John 1:9 (vol. 2, 880).

The editor has focused on accurately identifying the numerous sources, quotations, and references given by Guy de Brès in his text. In fact, the critical edition presented here contains 492 patristic quotations (19). To understand this approach, it should be noted that *Le Baston de la Foy chrestienne* was intended as a response to *Le Bouclier de la foy*, published in 1547 by Nicole Grenier, a monk at Saint-Victor in Paris (24, 48, and 52). However, reading the notes to the text reveals that *Le Baston* also responds to other Catholic authors, notably Johannes Eck on purgatory and the Book of Maccabees (64–66; see, for example, 834). In this context, the term 'baston' should be understood as 'a hand weapon or a sword' (25). As Moehn points out, Guy de Brès' intention was 'to equip Reformed believers to be able to refute their Inquisition interrogators and to strengthen them in the belief that they were the true successors of the apostles and church fathers' (27; see also 81).

The accumulation of quotations was gradual, and the work underwent constant change. In January 1558, Guy de Brès added twenty-seven new quotations (29). In February 1558, he reorganised the chapters and added three more (33). In 1559, he added another two chapters and nine quotations (34). The English edition of 1577, translated by John Brooke, is based on the first edition of 1555 (39). Finally, the text grew from nineteenth chapters (1555) to twenty-three (1559-1565): a complete table showing these changes is included in the introduction (40–41). As for quotations, they come mainly from Augustine (176 quotes) and Bodius (166 quotes), but also from Viret and Calvin for contemporary authors, and from Ambrose and Chrysostom for the Church Fathers (66). Starting with the 1563 and 1565 editions, de Brès adopted the chapter-verse division (68) and reduced the length of biblical quotations, as Moehn intelligently demonstrates through five examples: Isaiah 50:7–8, Isaiah 64:6, Luke 17:7–10, Romans 3:23–30, and Romans 11:5–6 (68–70).

The editor also provides a detailed physical description of the various editions (105–127), as well as an overview of the content of the twenty-three chapters (42–56). He shows how closely the text of *Le Baston de la Foy chrestienne* is linked to Guy de Brès' own readings and encounters. For example, the addition of chapter 22 on the persecution of the faithful seems to have been influenced by the French translation of Théodore de Bèze's *Traité de l'autorité des magistrats en la punition des hérétiques* (1559): a list of biblical examples comes directly from it (vol. 1, 34; vol. 2, 1042–1043). Similarly,

the addition of chapter 23 on the power of magistrates seems to stem from the 1559 version of the *Institution de la religion chrestienne*, in which Calvin adds the famous passage (IV, XX) on civil government (vol. 1, 35; vol. 2, 1060). In short, the study of sources and references thus highlights, between the lines, the existence of a network of exchanges within a confessional community.

We now eagerly await the publication of the three other planned volumes, hoping that the publishers will provide works of the same quality as this one.

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