

MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME
AND THE FRENCH LUTHERANS

A STUDY IN PRE-CALVIN REFORMATION IN FRANCE: II *

DANIEL WALTHER

Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan

Before John Calvin came on the scene of action, there existed a French movement of Evangelicals whose efforts coincided with the developments in Wittenberg. Before Luther's attack on Indulgences, a Paris professor, Lefèvre d'Étaples, wrote a commentary on Romans and inspired a "Fabrisian" movement which found a concrete manifestation in the Cénacle at Meaux, where Bishop G. Briçonnet attempted a reform of the clergy. Luther's writings began to be known and read in France shortly after they appeared in Germany. Marguerite of Alençon (later of Navarre), sister of Francis I, encouraged every intellectual and spiritual movement. She wrote hymns, tracts and plays which have a Lutheran accent—yet she was not a Lutheran in the confessional sense.

Because of the attitude of Parliament, Luther's writings went underground in France. So did the presses and the colporteurs. Crespin gave an account of the often forgotten men who brought Lutheran books into France. Among these colporteurs were humble artisans as well as noblemen, often paying with their lives for their dedication. Mace Moreau was burned at the stake, as were Jean Joëry, Nicolas Nail, and Denis LeVair.¹

* The first part of this article was published in *AUSS*, II (1964), 137-155. Research for both parts of this study was made possible with the support of the American Philosophical Society.

¹ Jean Crespin, *Le Livre des Martyrs* (Genève, 1554), I, 302; Daniel Lortsch, *Histoire de la Bible en France* (Genève, 1910), pp. 19-28.

François Lambert

One of the early French insurgents was François Lambert of Avignon (1486-1530), one of the few Frenchmen who went to Wittenberg. His aim was to become a French Reformer. First he translated a number of tracts, such as the *Betbüchlein*, whose rendering was attributed to Louis de Berquin. In Wittenberg he was joined, in 1523, by an obscure individual, Claudius à Tauro, and the well-known nobleman Anémond de Coct. Lambert admired the University of Wittenberg, "the first in the world where erudition overflows";² he met Luther, who prefaced his *Evangelical Commentary on the Rule of the Franciscan Minors*. In writing to the Elector, Lambert reported on conditions in France: "Souls are stirred in almost all France, and, without a teacher, truth has gained sincere friends."³ Giving his reason for leaving the country, he indicated that his fellow monks molested him and hid from him "those truly evangelical books of Luther." He came to Wittenberg to translate more of them and to become a diligent Bible commentator because, "while the Word abounds in Germany, the French people are deprived of it." Lambert explained how he left the Franciscan order and shed the "pharisaical robe": "Never would I have left them (the Observantines) if I had been permitted to preserve the freedom of evangelical truth." But he gave a rather puzzling reason for coming to Wittenberg: "to preach the Scriptures to the scholars in Wittenberg."⁴ Luther failed to

² A.-L. Herminjard, *Correspondance des Réformateurs dans les Pays de Langue Française* (Genève, 1871-1897), I, 122.

³ "*Gallia pene omnis commota est, et absque magistro sinceros habet veritatis dilectores,*" *ibid.*, I, 113.

⁴ "Veni igitur *Wittembergam*, ut Verbum sanctum libere administrem, saltem inter doctos. Aliquid nostri *Martini* consilio exordiar, vel *Oseam* prophetam, vel *Psalmos*, vel *Lucam*, vel aliquid tale. Sed per *Cristum* obsecro, ut jubeas mihi aliquod auxilium dari," *ibid.*; also "*Mais j'atteste le Seigneur, que jamais je ne les eusse quittés, si en restant au milieu d'eux, j'avais pu conserver la liberté de la vérité évangélique. . . .*" *ibid.*, pp. 113, 121-122.

be overly impressed; he wrote that the Frenchman would not last long in Wittenberg because he would soon find his equal. Later on Luther asked Spalatin to arrange for Lambert, who was poor in worldly goods, to leave Wittenberg so that he could go to Zürich, where the proximity of France would offer him a greater opportunity.⁵

Lambert's *Somme Chrestienne*, printed in Marburg, 1529, for Charles V, when he was at the Diet of Augsburg, is one of the rare French tracts published in Germany. This French Lutheran, who deserved this title as much as any other Frenchman (in Strasbourg he was referred to as "Dr. Wel-sche"), was not quite pleased with the emphasis placed on the person of Luther; he wrote to Charles V: "Sir, it is truly wrong to call some of us Lutherans, because we do not follow Luther but Jesus Christ. . . . However, we admit that God has at no time used anyone like him to reveal His holy truth."⁶ In Germany Lambert was not only under Luther's influence but also under that of Carlstadt, whose ideas are noticeable in Lambert's concepts on prophetism.

⁵ Luther to Spalatin, January 25, 1523: "Er wird nicht lang hie bleiben, acht ich wohl, denn er seins Gleichen oder Meister wohl finden wird," *ibid.*, p. 117; also, Luther to Spalatin, August 3 and 14, 1523: "Gratia et pax. Lambertus Franciscus statuit e nostris terris discedere Turegum, istic melius aliturus et majora facturus ob vicinitatem Galliae, qui apud nos esse copiam sentit docentium," *ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

⁶ François Lambert, *Somme chrestienne à tresvictorieux Empereur Charles, de ce nom le Cinquiesme* (Marburg, 1529); W. G. Moore, *La Réforme Allemande et la Littérature Française* (Strasbourg, 1930), pp. 72, 484. For further study see the following works of Lambert: *Christianissimi doc. Martini Lutheri et Annemundi Cocti equitis Galli* (Tübingen[?] 1523[?]); *Commentarii in Quatuor ultimos Prophetias*, 1526; *De Sacro Coniugio* (Norembergae, 1525); *The Summe of Christianitie* (London[?], 1536); *In regulam Minoritarum et contra universas perditionis sectas, Francisci Lamberti, . . . Commentarii vere evangelici denuo per ipsum recogniti . . .* (Avec une préface de Martin Luther, et une autre d'Annemundus Coctus; Argentorati, 1525). On Lambert see, J. W. Baum, *Franz Lambert von Avignon . . .* (Strassburg, 1840); F. W. Hassencamp, *Franciscus Lambert von Avignon* (Elberfeld, 1860); *ZKG*, XXII (1901), 129-144.

Other French Lutherans

Guillaume Dumolin, whom we find in Wittenberg in 1525, is known especially by the preface of *Très utile Traicté du vray regne de Antechrist*. It is most interesting to find that Dumolin was the author of the first rational French statement on Luther as a person. In his *Notable et utile traicté* he attacks the Marian cult, a mark of a French Lutheran, a "shibboleth of distinction."⁷

Many shared Farel's view that "the gospel was most eagerly received in France." Pierre de Sébiville wrote, in an eloquent letter to Anémond de Coct, that the partisans of the gospel in France had almost all cooled off. He referred to another French Lutheran, Antoine Papillon, who was considered an authority on the gospel and who performed an important task: the translation of Luther's *De Votis monasticis* purposely for Marguerite. But that caused him much trouble "with the Parisian vermin"—referring, of course, to the chicaneries of the Sorbonne. But there was a hopeful sign: "There is no one today in France who is more evangelical than Madame (Marguerite) d'Alençon."⁸ For translating that little tract on monastic vows, Papillon was well rewarded by Marguerite.

Sébiville also mentioned that Marguerite was accompanied by Michel d'Arande, who preached in her court "but the purest gospel." Marguerite also arranged for Michel to preach at St. Etienne du Bourg, the capital of Berry, one of Marguerite's domains. The archbishop dared Michel to preach, threatening life imprisonment and excommunication. Marguerite wrote that there would be no change; her chaplain would preach, and thus the archbishop's interdiction was

⁷ Henri Hauser, *Etudes sur la Réforme française* (Paris, 1909), p. 41, n. 2, suggests that the one trait which marked the French Lutheran was his attitude toward the Virgin; there was an anti-marian movement in France; Jérôme de Hangest, *Adversus Antimarianos propugnaculum* (Paris, 1529); Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁸ Anémond de Coct to Farel, December 17, 1524, Herminjard, *op. cit.*, p. 309; "Il a translate le traicte de votis monasticis," December 28, 1524; *ibid.*, p. 314.

not in order because, she wrote, "nothing is involved here except the honor of God." What about the threat of excommunication on those who would listen? "No one," she wrote, "needs to be afraid to hear the word of God."⁹

Luther repeatedly expressed his concern about the slowness of the progress of the gospel in France. He wrote to the Duke of Savoy, Charles III, whom he urged to use his high position in favor of the evangelical cause. The Reformer advised the Duke to see that the gospel should not be a mere spark but become a flame: "Fan that divine fire that burns in you so that the House of Savoy may be consumed as well as all of France."¹⁰

If the *cénacle* of Meaux could not convert France, would it be done by the Lutheran Louis de Berquin, as the *Histoire ecclésiastique* indicated as possible? An admirer of Erasmus and Luther, Berquin translated some of Luther's writings, as well as those of Melancthon and Hutten, without espousing all their ideas, but he succeeded in exposing again the ignorance of the clergy.¹¹ Suspected already in 1523 but protected by Marguerite, he was imprisoned in 1525 in the Conciergerie "because," said the contemporary *Bourgeois*, "he was a Lutheran and was punished for holding Luther's doctrine."¹² From his Madrid prison the King of France halted the proceedings. The following year, when Berquin was again apprehended, Marguerite intervened and asked Montmorency to set him free, "for I esteem it as if it were done for me."¹³

⁹ "Que nul ne craigne de ouir la parole de Dieu," *BSHPF*, LII (1903), 308-311; *ibid.*, LXX (1921), 170.

¹⁰ Luther to the duke of Savoy: "... et ardeat sanctum illud incendium Christi, immo flagret, ut vere tandem Francia possit dici ab Evangelio regnum Christianissimum quod hactenus ab impio Antichristum, propter effusionem sanguinem, officio, impie dictum est christianissimum!..." September 7, 1523; Herminjard, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-153.

¹¹ Charles d'Argentré, *De nov. error.*, I, i, XII, XIII; *BSHPF*, XXXVII (1889), 501.

¹² *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris*, p. 278; *BSHPF*, XXX (1882), 113.

¹³ Marguerite, *Lettres*, *op. cit.*, I, 219.

Berquin was jailed a third time: "My Lord," Marguerite wrote to the King, "poor Berquin, who through your kindness was saved twice, goes now having no one to whom to cry his innocence."¹⁶ In spite of Marguerite's pleas Berquin was condemned to die. Berquin's writings were never published, but he stood up with rare courage: "I am not a partisan of Lutheranism but I cannot agree to calumny, whoever might be the victim."¹⁷ He was burned in 1529 on the Place de Grève in Paris.

In the opinions of some, the French Reformation failed, because, to use Augustin Thierry's argument, it did not reach the popular elements.¹⁸ Indeed, the later Huguenot movement strongly appealed to the French nobility, but, during the pre-Calvin era, it was especially among the "little people," the *indocti*, the carders, weavers and merchants, students and cobblers, that we find the sparks of the Lutheran revolt—"ignorant people became overnight excellent theologians."¹⁹ It was the time when, according to Erasmus, bartenders argued about the gospel. Not one of France's eleven universities endorsed Lutheranism, but the agitation gained the public places, as well as intellectuals and princes. The first Lutheran victims were not in Germany but in Brussels—Henry Vos and Johann Esch—and Jean Leclerc in France. A carder was martyred in Metz, and so was Jean Vallière; Jacques Pauvan was arrested and burned in 1525 on the Place de Grève in Paris.²⁰ The movement in its inception had its

¹⁶ Marguerite, *Lettres*, II, 96, 97.

¹⁷ On the proceedings by Parliament against Berquin see Charles d'Argentré, *op. cit.*, IV, 406; Charles Marie G. B. Jourdain, *Index chronologicus chartarum pertinentium ad historiam Universitatis Parisiensis* (Parisiis, [n.d.]), p. 329.

¹⁸ Albert Autin, *L'échec de la Réforme en France au XVIe siècle* (Toulon, 1917), p. 133.

¹⁹ Hans H. Peters, "Luthers Einfluss und deutsche Lutheraner in Frankreich während des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Auslanddeutschtum und evangelische Kirche*, (1936), p. 236.

²⁰ François Lambert to Frederic of Saxony, March, 1525, Herminjard, *op. cit.*, pp. 344-347.

martyrs before it had its theologians, in a time when "it was almost improper for a Christian to die in his bed."²¹

Luther's books brought consolation to some but confused others; the anonymous Paris *Bourgeois* called him "a maker of books," and deplored the damaging debate on the Real Presence. "I have never believed it," wrote Farel, "but the progress of the gospel in France is hindered by our divergences and also by the reading of the first books of Luther which, to a certain extent, endorse the adoration of saints and purgatory."²² Opposition also arose from former sympathizers, most intelligent among whom was Josse Clichtove of Flanders, a former disciple of Lefèvre, and Cousturier.²³ Among the literati who were drawn to the turmoil and were affected by new ideas, we might recall that Marot, who was in Marguerite's service, was the gifted translator of the Psalms into French. Lutheranism was no issue to him, but both Catholics and Lutherans suspected him of heresy. He was jailed in the Châtelet prison, not because of subversive ideas, but because he ate lard during Lent! As he was pursued from place to place until he found asylum in Marguerite's court, he wrote that he was neither a Lutheran, much less a Baptist, but God's alone.²⁴

²¹ Ferdinand Buisson, *Sébastien Castellion* (Paris, 1892), I, 86; Jules Bonnet, *Aonio Paleario* (Paris, 1862), p. 171.

²² Farel to Jean Pomeranus, October 8, 1525, Herminjard, *op. cit.*, pp. 393-398: "In qua re versores librorum Martini male fratribus consulunt, qui priora ejus opera, in quibus nonnihil Sanctorum invocationi et Purgatorio defertur, non repurgant."

²³ On Clichtove, *ibid.*, p. 238: "*Clicthoveus olim noster*" (Roussel to Farel). Beside Clichtove, there were other opponents such as Cousturier; Lucien Febvre, "Une question mal posée . . ." *Revue Historique*, CLXI (1929), 48, n.2.

²⁴ Point ne suis Lutheriste

Ne Zwinglien, et moins Anabaptiste.

Je suis de Dieu par son fils Jesuchrist.

Oeuvres de Clément Marot (Paris, 1875), I, 153; Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 181. On other poets, see V. L. Saulnier, "Maurice Scève, Et. de Bourget Tabourot," *Bibl. d'Human. et Renaiss.*, XIX (1957), 252-265.

Marguerite a Lutheran?

Did Marguerite read Luther's books? It is not difficult to establish that she kept in close touch with the Lutheran writings before 1530. Her correspondence with Bishop Briçonnet is, of course, well known. That correspondence, partly published by Becker, began in 1521 and lasted for at least three years. Moore conjectured that the correspondence was vividly reminiscent of the "Babylonish captivity."²⁵ (It is true that the mystic language of both Marguerite and the Bishop are suggestive of Luther's expressions.) The letter by Sébiville, already mentioned, indicated that Marguerite had received Luther's tract on monastic vows through Papillon. In 1524, she finished writing the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, her most dogmatic writing, advocating salvation by grace alone. Soon after her trip to Madrid, where her brother was imprisoned after the defeat at Pavia in 1525, Gerbel informed Luther that Marguerite regularly received Luther's writings through Count Sigismond of Hohenlohe in Strasbourg, that "new Jerusalem."²⁶

Marguerite read Luther's books most assiduously in 1527 and 1528, keeping in touch with the Evangelicals in Strasbourg. Besides Hohenlohe, she corresponded with others, especially Bucer and Capito; the latter dedicated to her his commentary on Hosea.²⁷ Simon du Bois, the publisher of Luther's translated works in France, also published Marguerite's *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* (1531), together with the

²⁵ P. A. Becker, "Marguerite Duchesse d'Alençon et Guillaume Briçonnet Evêque de Meaux, d'après leur correspondance manuscrite, 1521-1524," *BSHPPF*, XLIX (1900), 393-477, 661-667.

²⁶ Marguerite d'Angoulême, *Lettres* (Paris, 1841), pp. 180, 211, 215, 466. On Strasbourg, see L. Febvre, "La France et Strasbourg au XVIe siècle. Un bilan," *La Vie en Alsace* (Strasbourg, 1925), pp. 239ff; (1926), 32ff; F. Wendel, "Le rôle de Strasbourg dans la Réforme française," *L'Alsace Française*, X (1930), 1, 20ff.

²⁷ Martin Bucer to Luther, August 25, 1530: "Nam *Rex à veritate alienus non est*, et, jam recuperatis liberis, non adeò à *Pontifice et Caesare*, hac quidem in cause, pendebit. Tum nunquam suo officio deest Christianissima illa heroina *Regis soror* . . ." Herminjard, *op. cit.*, II, 271.

Penitential Psalms, the *Psalter*, and the *Dialogue*. The year 1533 marked the peak of Marguerite's evangelical interest: Roussel, Courault, and Bertault preached the greatly advertised sermons of that year in the Louvre. The *Miroir* of Marguerite was reedited, and the wrath of the Sorbonne against her in particular and the new movement in general was at its height.

Not only did Marguerite read Luther, but she translated Luther's *Pater Noster*, published as a transposition of the *Salve Regina*.²⁸ Already in 1525 Sebaldus Heyden, a well-known Nuremberg teacher and musician, had transposed the *Salve Regina* to Christ (*Salve Jesu Christe*).²⁹ This same prayer appeared in Farel's 1534 edition of the *Summaire*, and from that prayer is derived the beautiful first hymn of French Protestantism, of which Marguerite was most likely the author: "Je te salue mon certain Rédempteur."

Two Reformation specialists insist that Luther's influence on Marguerite was important: (1) Abel Lefranc, who qualifies her without reservation a Lutheran, and (2) Henri Strohl, who sees in all of her poems Luther's basic teachings. W. G. Moore also, who has carefully examined the texts of the *Dialogue* of 1524 and the *Miroir*, has pointed to the striking similarities between Marguerite's and Luther's writings. Like Marguerite, Luther constantly used the marriage relationship as a symbol of the intimacy between God and the soul—the crowning work of faith being the union of God with the soul of man—and Marguerite mentions it in the very title. Luther's contempt for works is of course noticeable in Marguerite's "You may pray the *Pater* as often as you wish,"³⁰ and

²⁸ Marguerite de Navarre, *Le Pater Noster fait en translation et dyalogue par la Royne de Navarre* (Paris, 1896); *Revue de la Renaissance*, IV (1904).

²⁹ Sebaldus Heyden, *Unum Christum Mediatorem esse et advocatum nostrum apud patrem non matrem ejus, neque divos...* (Genève, 1525).

³⁰ Vous avez beau dire Paternostre,
Ouir vepres, matines ou prou messes,
Peu de bien est-ce-que dehors se montre...

the Pauline accent which clearly appears in the *Miroir*.

It is difficult to define Marguerite's religious outlook. She has been called Lutheran, Catholic, Calvinist, spiritual, skeptical, libertine, evangelical, mystic, hypocritical. Mystic seems to be a frequent and acceptable designation. She was drawn to the Neo-Platonic notions of Ficino, Bessarion, and Plethon. Similar views expressed by Pico, Bembo, and Castiglione, had a marked influence on Marguerite.³¹ The Ficino type of love was coined by Pelletier du Mans as the "philosophy of France," an antidote to Lucretius and Pomponazzi, and was a type of Platonism feared by Calvin, who saw among the Nicodemites "many cultured people who were attracted by the philosophy of Plato but were not interested in reforming the church."³²

From the outset, Marguerite "tried every system to find out for herself what was taught and believed."³³ Her interest in the Protestant trends lasted until about 1536. "After the affair of the *Miroir*," says the *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, "she acted differently and plunged deeply into idolatry, like the rest." Bayle wrote that, after 1533, "she behaved in a manner which the Calvinists highly condemned."³⁴ Before that time, she belonged to almost every group, according to her biographers. "She always was a Lutheran," thinks Jacob. "No," says Doumic, "she was a Catholic, that faith which was

Dialogue en forme de Vision nocturne entre tres noble et excellente princesse Marguerite de France, Soeur unique de nostre Roy nostre Sire et l'âme de defuncte Madame Charlotte de France, v. 568. It appeared first, 1533, together with the second edition of the *Miroir*, but it was written in 1524, the first of Marguerite's religious writings; Lucien P. Febvre, *Autour de l'Heptaméron* (Paris, 1944), pp. 40-42; Moore, *op.cit.*, pp. 187 ff.

³¹ André Marie Jean Festugière, *La philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin et son influence sur la littérature française au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1941), pp. 3, 4, 31.

³² *Ioannis Calvinis opera quae supersunt omnia*, VI, col. 600.

³³ Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême Duchesse d'Alençon Reine de Navarre* (Thèse; Paris, 1930), I, 48.

³⁴ *Hist. Ecclés.*, I, 36; Pierre Bayle, *Dict. hist. et crit.* (Rotterdam, 1697), III, 468.

always hers." "On the contrary," writes Faguet, "she is permeated with Calvinistic thought."³⁵ Some (Hyrsoix) accuse her of hypocrisy because of her "hatred for the Catholic church." A clever formula is Doumergue's: "She thought as a Protestant but acted like a Catholic."³⁶ Brunetière saw neither a Catholic nor a Protestant in her—she merely belonged to the group of Rabelais and Marot. If she must be confined to a sect it would be that of the Spiritual Libertines. And Doumic calls her an insoluble case: "She was a woman," he said, "and you can't expect her to be logical."³⁷ And thus we could multiply the quotations, of which Jourda has made a very careful inventory.³⁸

Abel Lefranc was of the opinion that she was a Protestant. The distinguished publisher of her last poems saw in her *Dialogue* of 1524 her first literary and evangelical statement where she affirms that salvation is in Christ alone, that man cannot cooperate, and that grace is a gift of the Creator. The *Oraison de l'âme fidèle* discusses predestination; *Le triomphe de l'Agneau* depicts Christ's victory over the law. Lefranc was convinced that the *Miroir* was more revolutionary still. It does reveal a type of Paulinism—but revolutionary? Hardly. At the same time, Marguerite in that writing does not entirely reject the intervention of the saints or the efficacy of the sacraments. But it is undeniable that her spiritual songs have a Protestant accent. The spiritual song which she perfected is her contribution to militant Protestantism. What Lefranc saw in the *Comédie jouée au Mont-de Marsan* was her condemnation of sensualism and Catholic bigotry.³⁹ Her definition

³⁵ "A mesure qu'elle se sent près du terme de son existence, elle adhère de toutes ses forces aux dogmes de la foi catholique qui a toujours été la sienne," *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, June 15, 1896, and: "... plus on ira et plus il faudra expliquer les parties les plus élevées de Marguerite de Valois par le Calvinisme..." *Cosmopolis* (April, 1896), p. 177.

³⁶ Emile Doumergue, *Jean Calvin* (Lausanne, 1899), I, 406, 415.

³⁷ *Revue des Deux-Mondes* (1896); *ibid.*, (15 Juin, 1936).

³⁸ Pierre Jourda, *op. cit.*, p. 1032.

³⁹ Abel Lefranc, *Les Idées Religieuses de Marguerite*, (Paris, 1898),

of love, the "philosophy of France," is quite similar to that of the antinomian sect of the Spiritual Libertines.

Sometimes her ideas were conflicting. On the one hand she referred to "the elect whom God was pleased to choose" and hoped that she was "deserving to be predestinated." On the other, she saw free will as a basic element in man's redemption. While Protestants have claimed her as their own, the Catholics have done the same. Vergerio, Contarini's disciple, marveled at the spirit of the Queen of Navarre, and compared her to Vittoria Colonna, Renata, and Leonora Gonzaga. Those who saw in Marguerite a Catholic referred to the fact that she received the Eucharist at Madrid, where her brother, King Francis I, was jailed, and she took communion at the bedside of her mother. All this, in her friends' eyes, was a mere gesture: her receiving the extreme unction, praying often before a crucifix, etc. But Aleander thought that she was won over to the new ideas, though she remained always on excellent terms with the pope.

Marguerite's Mystic Nostalgia

Let us have another look at the cénacle of Meaux, where Bishop G. Briçonnet had gathered several men who were under the spiritual influence of Lefèvre and whose aim was to reform the clergy. These men were suspected of heresy for having published the New Testament in French, and the *Psalter*.⁴⁰ The anonymous *Bourgeois* wrote that "it is to be noted that Meaux was infested by the false doctrine of Luther." Off and on, there were Farel, Mazurier, F. Vatable, the Hebrew scholar, and Caroli, with whom Calvin was to have so much trouble, and Michel d'Arande, a little-known Augustinian hermit.⁴¹ Marguerite wrote to Briçonnet of her hunger "for

p. 27; Lefranc, *Mélanges* (Paris, 1936). The *Comédie* was written Jan.-Feb., 1548, a year before her death.

⁴⁰ Lefèvre to Farel, July 6, 1524, Herminjard, *op. cit.*, I, 219.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41, n.; M. Bataillon, *Erasmus et l'Espagne* (Paris, 1937),

bread, even if it were a few crumbs"; she compared herself to a lost sheep in a foreign land. "I come to you and Mr. Fabry and the other gentlemen begging for alms," she wrote, requesting also to be granted "an alarm clock" to be awakened from her heavy and mortal slumber "since the time has come . . ." ⁴² Marguerite, a victim of spiritual nostalgia, used that mystic jargon, "sublime galimatias" as Michelet called it, but promised that she would be their mouthpiece at the court. "Oh yes," wrote Briçonnet, "give the Lord that little heart liberally, entirely," asking her to intercede with the members of the royal household, like Ste. Cécile, who won her husband and brother. ⁴³ And it seemed to succeed, for Marguerite informed Briçonnet: "The King and Madame have decided, yesterday, that they will have it known that God's truth is no heresy." ⁴⁴ But that was in 1521.

By 1524 Briçonnet too was suspected of Lutheranism, and he renounced hurriedly and in profuse terms what he was accused of. Briçonnet said that since "almost the whole earth is filled with his (Luther's) books, and since the masses easily fall for new things, and were seduced by the liveliness of his style, [and] could be caught by the false and imaginary liberty which he preaches. . . for this reason. . . we deem it

p. 536. In a "Lutheran" song there is an allusion to Michel and Marguerite:

Vostre erreur creust jusques alecon
 Soubz une simple courteaosie
 Michelot et [en?] faisoit lecon
 Dieu scet de quelle theologie. . .

Ms. No. 15939 in the Library of the *Société de l'hist. du Protest. franç.*

⁴² Marguerite to Briçonnet, February 9, 1524: "Vous priant par vos oraisons impétrer de l'indicible misericorde *ung reveille-matin* pour la pauvre endormie, afin qu'elle se lève de son pesant et mortel somme, *puisque l'heure est venue*. . . . Et voyant de toutes ces choses en moy trop de deffault, je retourne a vous et a Monsieur Fabry et tous voz sieurs, vous requerant l'aumosne. . ." Herminjard, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

⁴³ "Soiez la bonne sainte Cécile, qui gaigne mary, frères, et plusieurs aultres. . ." Briçonnet to Marguerite, November 11, 1521, *ibid.*, 478; *Rev. de théol. et de quest. relig.*, (Montauban, 1900), 300.

⁴⁴ Herminjard, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

our duty to eradicate it entirely.”⁴⁵ And he warned the clergy that “in these last days” there would be some who deny the existence of purgatory and the invocation of saints. But among those affected by his decree was his respected master, Lefèvre. Furthermore, while Briçonnet anathematized Luther, he kept on showing the greatest esteem for Oecolompadius, and sought and followed the advice of Bucer.

The “Miroir.” A Summing Up

The best known of Marguerite’s religious writings is the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*. The title was not original. A number of *Mirrors* were written before (see the Hultemiana collection at Brussels): *Mirover des dames*; *Miroir* of Ruybroeck; and Reuchlin’s *Augenspiegel*. Marguerite’s *Miroir* is “biblian” and essentially Pauline. Florimond lamented: “Alas, while King Francis works to protect the kingdom against the floods of the Rhine, the Queen of Navarre is endeavoring to break the dikes and to open the sluices.” Florimond further stated: “It is the Queen of Navarre who maintains in France the disciples of Luther. She alone placed them in schools. She alone watches with marvelous care and keeps them from all harm.”⁴⁶

The Sorbonne resented Marguerite’s insistence on justification as expressed in the *Miroir*. Beda especially was furious. Now at last he had a proof of heresy: Marguerite was accused of not mentioning the saints, meritorious works, purgatory, and of replacing the *Salve Regina* by a “Salutation to Christ.”

The furor about Marguerite’s *Miroir* caused a Cordelier monk to suggest that she be thrown into the Seine river. Marguerite was hard pressed, and many, like the unrelenting Montmorency, tried to discredit her at court. But Francis I

⁴⁵ See various letters by Briçonnet to a) “Aux fidèles de son diocèse” and b) “Au clergé de son diocèse,” Herminjard, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-158, 320; Doumergue, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁴⁶ Florimond de Raemond, *Histoire de la naissance . . . de l’hérésie*, (Rouen, 1629), pp. 847, 848.

was not impressed. "Let's forget about her," the king said, "she loves me too much. She will never believe other than what I believe and never will she endorse a religion that would cause prejudice to my state."⁴⁷

A play by the students at the College of Navarre exposed her and Roussel to public ridicule. Eventually Marguerite lived through the crisis. The monk who had suggested that she be thrown into the river was to undergo the ordeal himself, but she intervened in his favor. The authors and players of the comedy were punished. As for the *Miroir*, the King's confessor, Guillaume Petit, stated: "They take up arms against an excellent woman who is at the same time protector and mother of all virtues." Most conspicuous of all was the fact that the prosecuting theologians had not even read the book. Beda was jailed. The *Miroir* was taken off the list of forbidden books. Nicolas Cop, son of the king's physician and brother of Jean, another "novator," gathered the Faculties to report to the king that Marguerite's book had been neither attacked nor even read, and the Bishop of Senlis said he found only good things in this book unless he had forgotten all his theology.⁴⁸

From a Catholic viewpoint the *Miroir* was unorthodox. Although Marguerite still could not disentangle herself from the mystic jargon which she used in corresponding with Briçonnet, the idea was clear: she applied to her spiritual life the notion of gratuitous justification, undeserved and sufficient.

To sum up—but how dangerous it is to conclude! On the question that is still debated: was Marguerite a Protestant, a Lutheran? we attempt to say: *No*, if by Protestantism is meant a rigidly defined doctrine, be it Lutheran or Calvinistic; *Yes*, if by Protestantism we mean an effort at renewing church

⁴⁷ Pierre de Bourdeille, abbé de Brantôme, *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1864-82), VIII, 216.

⁴⁸ Jean Calvin, *Opera* . . . (ed., Baum, Cunitz, and Reuss; Brunsvigae, 1863-1900) I, 27-30.

and society, belief in salvation by grace as advocated by Lefèvre, and reaching directly out to God in mystic fashion. Marguerite's religious attitude is incomprehensible, if she is to be hemmed into a confessional system; but it is simple if we consider her thirst for knowledge and love, and her unconcern as to who would quench her thirst. We cannot see her in the Lutheran fold any more than we can make a chauvinistic Frenchman out of Lefèvre for the sake of accommodating a modern historical conception. While Lefèvre did greatly influence his generation by his *Commentaries*, we do not overlook Luther's influence in France, where some of his ideas coincided with those of Lefèvre and Marguerite. Had Luther been endowed with a gift or concern for proselytism like Calvin's, a firmer basis might have been established in France.

Intellectually independent, yet easily influenced, Marguerite was not impressed by the stiff inexorableness of existing orthodoxy: "My religion is based on James' words: to my God a heart sound and clean, and to my fellowmen the power to do good." This charming and gifted mother of the French Renaissance was, to paraphrase Ronsard's lyrical expression, the most beautiful flower ever born on a golden morning.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ The two last lines in Ronsard's "Ode Pastorale" are:

"... La plus belle fleur d'eslite
Qu'oncques l'aurore enfanta."

Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses, I, 23.