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## A Rhetoric of the Mask. Bèze's Discursive Strategies against the *Patrones Clementiae (De haereticis, 1554)*

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Cette contribution porte sur les stratégies discursives de Théodore de Bèze dans son *De haereticis* (1554), écrit contre les « apôtres de la tolérance » (ou, plus exactement, « avocats de la clémence ») comme Castellion. Bèze accuse ses adversaires d'avoir dissimulé leur identité et leurs intentions véritables derrière un semblant de clémence et entreprend d'ôter leur masque. Le processus de dévoilement, à travers les métaphores des diables déguisés et des loups sous l'apparence de brebis, menace ses ennemis presse le lecteur à agir contre eux. Bèze donne ainsi forme à une rhétorique du masque, qui consiste à désigner les choses comme dissimulées afin de mieux les mettre en lumière selon les objectifs de l'auteur.

Théodore de Bèze, intolérance, hérésie, histoire de la Réforme, Sebastian Castellio

This contribution focuses on Théodore de Bèze's discursive strategies in his *De haereticis* (1554), written against the "apostles of tolerance" (more accurately "advocates of leniency") such as Castellio. Bèze accuses his opponents of having cloaked their identity and true intentions in a pretence of clemency and undertakes to pull off their masks. The unveiling process, through the metaphors of devils in disguise and wolves in sheep's clothing, threatens his enemies and prompts the reader to act against them. Bèze thus shapes a rhetoric of the mask, which consists in pointing out things as concealed to better shed light on them in line with the writer's purposes.

Théodore de Bèze, Intolerance, Heresy, Reformation History, Sebastian Castellio

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On 27 October 1553, the Spanish theologian Michael Servetus, well-known for his critical positions on Trinity and baptism and considered a heretic by both Rome and

Geneva, was burned alive after a long trial. This event fuelled a fierce controversy over whether it was permitted to the civil Magistrate to punish heresy by death. A few months after Servetus's burning, several detractors led by a mysterious Martinus Bellius, most probably Sebastian Castellio, published the *De haereticis, an sint persequendi*, a compilation of extracts by various authors arguing that heretics should not be punished by the death sentence<sup>1</sup>. A month later, Calvin's *Defensio orthodoxae Fidei* was published to justify the killing of Servetus<sup>2</sup>. Yet, neither of the two works answered the other. A clear response to the *De haereticis* was thus needed. While teaching in Lausanne, the Reformed theologian Théodore de Bèze (1519–1605) managed to publish by the end of the year his *De haereticis a civili Magistratu puniendis* – “*That heretics should be punished by the civil Magistrate*”; this work was to be translated into French by the theologian Nicolas Colladon in 1559<sup>3</sup>.

The term tolerance has been employed extensively in studies dedicated to the Servetus case and the ensuing controversy, yet it appears problematic, if not ambiguous, due to its confessional or ideological uses<sup>4</sup> and to its multiple meanings<sup>5</sup>. Many scholars have been or are still keen to speak of Castellio and his collaborators as “apostles of tolerance”, yet another anachronism<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, Théodore de Bèze

<sup>1</sup> [Sebastian Castellio] *et al.*, *De haereticis, an sint persequendi, et omnino quomodo sit cum eis agendum, luteri et brenti, aliorumque multorum tum veterum tum recentiorum sententiae*, Magdeburg [Basel], Georgium Rausch [Jean Oporin], 1554; *Traicté des heretiques...*, Rouen [Lyon], Pierre Freneau [Jean Pidet], 1554; *Von Ketzeren...*, Strasbourg [Basel], Augustin Frisius [Jean Oporin], 1555. I use the following editions: *De haereticis, an sint persequendi...* [now DHSP], pref. S. van der Woude, Geneva, Droz, 1954; *Traité des hérétiques...* [now THSP], pref. E. Choisy, ed. A. Olivet, Geneva, Jullien, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Defensio orthodoxae fidei de sacra Trinitate, contra prodigiosos errores Michaelis Serveti Hispani*, [Geneva], Robert I Estienne, 1554; *Declaration pour maintenir la vraye foy*, Geneva, Jean Crespin, 1554.

<sup>3</sup> Théodore de Bèze, *De haereticis a civili Magistratu puniendis libellus, adversus Martini Bellii farraginem, et novorum Academicorum sectam* [now DHCMP], [Geneva], Robert I Estienne, 1554; *Traité de l'autorité du Magistrat en la punition des heretiques et du moyen d'y procéder...* [now TAMPH], transl. N. Colladon, [Geneva], Conrad Badius, 1559. Some scholars refer to it as *Anti-Bellius*.

<sup>4</sup> From the 19<sup>th</sup> century and yet to this day, historiography has been skewed by a concern with confessional promotion, modern debates on religious tolerance and anti-authoritarianism. (See, i.a., Ole P. Grell, “Introduction”, in Ole P. Grell & Bob Scribner (eds), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, Cambridge, CUP, 1996, p. 1-12; Alexandra Walsham, “Toleration, Pluralism, and Coexistence: The Ambivalent Legacies of the Reformation”, *ARG*, 108, 2017, p. 181-190.) Hence a sometimes misplaced enthusiasm regarding the figures of Castellio or Servetus. (See, i.a., Valentine Zuber, « L'invention du héros d'un protestantisme libéral », in Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud (dir.), *Sébastien Castellion*, Paris, Garnier, 2013, p. 33-56.)

<sup>5</sup> It is argued that two main forms of tolerance can be identified in early-modern France: a provisional, resigned one contained in the royal “édits de pacification”, and an underground, intellectual one bearing on freedom of conscience. (Denis Crouzet, “Genèses simulées et dissimulées de la tolérance ‘moderne’: le problème d'un transfert conceptuel”, *Loxias-Colloques*, 20, 2023, <http://revel.unice.fr/symposia/actel/index.html?id=1984>; Mario Turchetti, « ‘Concorde ou tolérance ?’ de 1562 à 1598 », *Rev. hist.*, 274, 1985, 2, p. 341–355. On the notion of tolerance, see the overview Véronique Montagne, Anne Brogini & Odile Gannier, “Tolérance(s). Réflexions préliminaires”, *Loxias-Colloques*, 18, 2021, <http://revel.unice.fr/symposia/actel/index.html?id=1305>.)

<sup>6</sup> See Marie-Cécile Gomez-Géraud, « Qui parle encore de Sébastien Castellion ? », *AJFS*, 52, 2015, 3, p. 265; Vincent Schmid, “Avant-propos”, in Vincent Schmid, Max Engammare, Philippe Fromont *et al.* (eds), *Castellion à Vandœuvres (1515-2015)*, Geneva, Droz, 2017, p. 9.

designates the latter, sarcastically, as “advocates of clemency” (*patroni clementiae*), as “those gentle people (*clementes*), advocates of heretics” or as “protectors, not of liberty but of public licence”<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, one should favour the terms “clemency” or “leniency” found in the sources, that is, showing mercy towards heretics by not killing them (and arguing one must not do so). Furthermore, tolerance brings up new issues when confronted with the expression of its opposite. Scholars have tended to perceive Bèze’s *De haereticis* as a manifesto of intolerance, through the prism of Castellio<sup>8</sup>. Intolerance is an anachronistic concept which cannot historically be applied to Calvin and Bèze, even if they considered their doctrine as the “only true one”, “excluding all others”<sup>9</sup>. Although not found in the sources, the neutral term *inclementia*, intended as a lack of leniency, seems appropriate. The *clementes* opposed their plea for clemency to the core accusation of *crudelitas* towards the *inclementes*<sup>10</sup>. Of course, the latter did not refer to themselves as “cruel” – quite the opposite in fact. They rather appealed to a “legitimate severity” (*justa severitate*) or “authority” (*legitimam potestatem*) of the Magistrate<sup>11</sup>. As we will see, one of Bèze’s objectives was to reverse this accusation of cruelty. He and Calvin intended to “defend the orthodox faith” threatened by what they viewed as the ultimate danger, heresy<sup>12</sup>.

This paper aims to better understand the discourse of Théodore de Bèze as a defender of the coercion of conscience. Rather than focusing on Bèze’s political and theological arguments<sup>13</sup>, this contribution examines a selection of discursive strategies used along the text<sup>14</sup>. Bèze denounces the resort of the *clementes* to

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<sup>7</sup> E.g., *vos praeposteri clementiae patroni*, transl. by Colladon “vous autres advocats je ne scay quels de clemence”. Also : *clementes isti haereticorum patroni* or *vos publicae non libertatis sed licentiae vindices*. (DHCMP, p. 96, 105, 65 ; TAMPH, p. 150, 162, 99–100.)

<sup>8</sup> Odile Panetta, “Heresy and Authority in the thought of Théodore de Bèze”, *R&R*, 45, 2022, 1, p. 37. E.g., « son *De haereticis a civili Magistratu puniendis* est truffé d’attaques personnelles trop injustes pour que l’on puisse le tenir pour estimable ». (Roman d’Amat, “Castellion”, in *DBF*, 7, 1956, col. 1374.)

<sup>9</sup> Mario Turchetti, « Calvin face aux tenants de la concorde (moyenneurs) et aux partisans de la tolérance (castellionistes) », in Olivier Millet (dir.), *Calvin et ses contemporains*, Geneva, Droz, 1998, p. 55–56 – translation is mine. The Bernese political and religious system Bèze experienced in Lausanne, according to which the intervention of the civil Magistrate in religious affairs is legitimate, helps to understand his doctrinal rigidity on this matter. (See Jean-Claude Carron, “*Abraham sacrificant* de Théodore de Bèze. Exil et propagande évangéliques au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *RHT*, 54, 2004, p. 71–74.)

<sup>10</sup> *Solent enim isti clementiae et sanguinis se patronos dicere, nos contra carnifices, sanguinarios, persecutores vocare*. (DHCMP, p. 85; TAMPH, p. 132. See also DHCMP, p. 6; TAMPH, p. 6–7.) Salvadori has already used the terminology *clementes/inclementes*. (“Socrate contre Aristote. Sébastien Castellion et la discussion sur les modèles rhétoriques”, in Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud (dir.), *Sébastien Castellion*, Paris, Garnier, 2013, p. 371–392.)

<sup>11</sup> DHCMP, p. 117, 119–120; TAMPH, p. 182–183, 186–187. In his correspondence to Bullinger, Bèze calls them “the party of godly men” (*magno assensu piorum*) and *melior pars*. (L. 34 to Bullinger, 27 August 1554, in *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, I: 1539–1555 [now *Corr.*], eds H. Meylan, A. Dufour & C. Chimelli, Geneva, Droz, 1960, p. 107.)

<sup>12</sup> Calvin’s treatise to justify the execution of Servetus titles *Defensio*. Bèze takes the same stand; he also writes to defend the authority of the other *inclementes*, and of the Church Fathers he accuses Bellius to divert. (DHCMP, p. 8, 119–120, 135; TAMPH, p. 9, 186–187, 211.)

<sup>13</sup> See Odile Panetta, “Heresy and Authority in the thought of Théodore de Bèze”, *R&R*, 45, 2022, 1, p. 33–72.

pseudonyms and allusive writing as “masks” hiding their intentions<sup>15</sup>. In this way, I will examine how the author gives shape to an accusatory rhetoric of falseness, and how he instrumentalizes this rhetoric of the mask to reverse the accusation of cruelty and to call to action against his opponents. These discursive practices are far from being original as they form a common feature in humanistic jurisprudence<sup>16</sup> – e.g., one can think to Calvin’s posture against what he called “hypocrisy”<sup>17</sup>. Yet a specific interest of such practices in the context of the Servetus case lies in their framing of Bèze’s *inclementia*. I will proceed by first underlining the author’s issue with the resort of pseudonyms before examining how, with the help of the metaphors of the wolf and of the Devil, he further *masks* his opponents to better *unmask* them. I will then see how Bèze’s rhetoric instrumentalizes fear and calls to retaliation.

## Fake names and allusive writing: factual concealing

The living authors who played a part in the *De haereticis, an sint persequendi* used pseudonyms: Martinus Bellius, who wrote the preface, most likely is Sebastian Castellio<sup>18</sup>; Georgius Kleinbergius may be David Joris<sup>19</sup>; Basilius Montfortius certainly hides Castellio<sup>20</sup>. Bèze’s correspondence with Bullinger shows him puzzled by the fake names. He tends to bring Bellius and Castellio together<sup>21</sup>, and claims Montfortius to be Celio Curione<sup>22</sup>. Yet the identity of his opponents remains a problematic issue, and he will address “Bellius and his faction” by their pseudonyms, rather than risk giving names<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> This paper is complementary to another I wrote, applying discourse analysis methods in a religious deviance-orthodoxy approach: Aurélien Bourgaux, “Exclure l’hérésie, bâtir l’orthodoxie selon Théodore de Bèze (*De haereticis*, 1554)”, *MethIS*, 7, 2022, <https://popups.uliege.be/2030-1456/index.php?id=514>.

<sup>15</sup> On pseudonyms as masks in literature, see, i.a., David Martens (dir.), *La Pseudonymie dans la littérature française*, Rennes, PUR, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> On juridical rhetoric, see Marie Houlemare, *Politiques de la parole. Le parlement de Paris au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Geneva, Droz, 2011. On Bèze’s humanistic jurisprudence, see Christoph Strohm, “Wirkungen der juristischen Schulung auf Bezas theologisches Oeuvre”, in Irena Backus (dir.), *Théodore de Bèze*, Geneva, Droz, 2007, p. 517-535.

<sup>17</sup> See, i.a., Ruth Stawarz-Luginbühl, *Un théâtre de l’épreuve*, Geneva, Droz, 2012, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> I do not take into account the last claim to identify Bellius to Martin Borrhaus, as the argument lacks substance. (Francisco Javier González Echeverría & William Kemp, “Martín Borrhaus (1499-1564) es el autor principal del *Tratado de los herejes* de 1554”, in Cristina Borreguero Beltrán *et al.*, *A la sombra de las catedrales*, Burgos, Universidad de Burgos, 2021, p. 953-966.)

<sup>19</sup> Mirjam van Veen, “Contaminated with David Joris’s blasphemies. David Joris’s contribution to Castellio’s *De haereticis an sint persequendi*”, *BHR*, 69, 2007, 2, p. 313-326.

<sup>20</sup> [Sebastian Castellio], *De l’impunité des hérétiques. De haereticis non puniendis* [now DHNP], pref. B. Becker, Geneva, Droz, 1971, p. 3-4. Celio Curione (quoted without a pseudonym), Martin Borrhaus and Lelio Sozzini may also have played a part. (DHSP, p. VI.)

<sup>21</sup> L. 42 to Bullinger, 29 March 1554, *Corr.*, 1, p. 123; L. 44 to Bullinger, 7 May 1554, in *Corr.*, 1, p. 127.

<sup>22</sup> L. 45 to Bullinger, 14 June 1554, *Corr.*, 1, p. 129. Bèze writes he also identified another author, whose name he prefers not to mention but by the mouth of the messenger because Bullinger might consider him in high esteem. This might be Lelio Sozzini, who then lived in Zurich.

<sup>23</sup> E.g., an interpolated clause he adds regarding Montfortius: *quicumque tandem ille sit qui sub hoc nomine delitescit*. (DHCMP, p. 208; TAMPH, p. 328.) Bèze refers to Castellio’s Latin translation of the Bible (Oporin, Basel, 1551) without naming him; he includes him among the *clementes* by calling him “one of yours”. (DHCMP, p. 64–65; TAMPH, p. 97-98.)

Montfortius resorted to a fake name due to the peril of the enterprise: he claims that he would have come to the *inclementes* if they were not “discussing by blades, flames and waters”, and thinks safer to write “from a distance” (*eminus*)<sup>24</sup>. Bèze denies such practice and calls him *sycophanta* (slanderer); he states that Montfortius must be indeed a heretic if he feels too frightened to expose his true name. In the Bezan *De haereticis*, fake names become a matter for reproach, even more: an accusation. The reformer does not miss any occasion to hammer this point home: “why did you pass over your name in silence (*subticiuisti*)<sup>25</sup>?”

Moreover, falseness and omissions are not limited to the identity of the authors. Indeed, the place of publishing states Magdeburg instead of Basel, which does not fool Bèze<sup>26</sup>. The context of the matter discussed in the first *De haereticis* remains voluntarily allusive, as there is no explicit mention of the Servetus case, another omission for which Bèze criticizes his opponents<sup>27</sup>. Bèze also disqualifies their writing itself as devious and marked by circumlocutions<sup>28</sup>. Yet underlining the factual resort to pseudonyms and allusive writing only forms a part of the rhetoric of the mask.

## Down with the masks: fictional veiling and unveiling

Bèze’s introduction to the treatise alludes to Pharaoh’s army pursuing the people of Israel as they were fleeing Egypt (Ex 14:7–10). On the verge of being freed by Moses, the Hebrews were attacked by “an infinite number of enemies” who acted against them “under the disguise of piety” (*per simulatione pietatis*). He adds: “Of such ungrateful minds, we have recently seen a notable example, whose vileness made me think that I should by no means remain silent now<sup>29</sup>.” Indeed, the Ministers of Geneva who tried to make Servetus abjure were accused by some “spies of Satan” (*Satanae emissarii* – “supposts de Satan” in French), some “cunning men” (*homines astuti*), of having cloaked (*induisse*) their own *cupiditas* in the name of piety. According to their detractors, the intention of the pastors would have been to “oppress” Servetus “under the pretence of religion<sup>30</sup>”, but Bèze claims that it is in fact those detractors, the *clementes*, who are acting under cover to “proceed against the orthodox Churches” with all impunity<sup>31</sup>. This idea is remanent in the whole text<sup>32</sup>, as it is indeed the nature of heretics to “cloak their pertinacity in a shadow of

<sup>24</sup> As Jotham, afraid of Abimelech, did with the people of Sichem (Jg 9:7). (DHSP, p. 139; THSP, p. 158.)

<sup>25</sup> DHCMP, p. 211-212; TAMPH, p. 333.

<sup>26</sup> Bèze states to Bullinger: “if I am not mistaken, this Magdeburg, is on the Rhine”. (L. 42 to Bullinger, 29 March 1553, in *Corr.*, 1, p. 123.) He does not mention the printer, Oporin, but surely thinks of him. (L. 45 to Bullinger, 14 June 1554, in *Corr.*, 1, p. 130.)

<sup>27</sup> DHCMP, p. 5; TAMPH, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> DHCMP, p. 63; TAMPH, p. 96-97.

<sup>29</sup> *Eius ingrati animi insigne exemplum nuper spectavimus, cuius indignitas fecit ut mihi hoc tempore minime tacendum putarem.* (DHCMP, p. 3; TAMPH, p. 2.)

<sup>30</sup> DHCMP, p. 4; TAMPH, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> DHCMP, p. 5; TAMPH, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> I.a., DHCMP, p. 200, 212 ; TAMPH, p. 314, 334. Bèze also mobilizes the well-spread image of light and shadow by claiming that “Bellius and his faction” seek nothing but to “obfuscate the truth”, and later contrasts this shadowy attitude with that of the orthodox reformers who are not afraid to come forth into light. (DHCMP, p. 8, 126; TAMPH, p. 10, 196-197.)

piety<sup>33</sup>”. On the contrary to factual concealing, these accusations result from Bèze’s own interpretations. One crafts oneself the mask one accuses the other of wearing. The fictional charges of concealing aim in turn at legitimizing and providing materials to a discourse of unveiling. Bèze shoulders the task to pull off the masks and uncover the truth:

From the latter it appears that the simpleness and the conscience of those are nothing else but masks they put to deceive the incautious. But now pulling off such masks, let us yet examine whence they argue that there are no people among all men who are to be feared less than heretics<sup>34</sup>.

The theme of the mask (*personatus, simulatio, species, praetexere*, etc.), alongside the urgent need to uncover what hides behind it, recurs throughout the whole treatise<sup>35</sup>. Bèze best expresses this rhetoric through two biblical metaphors much frequent in polemics, the one of the wolves and the one of the Devil.

### Wolves in sheep’s clothing

In the first *De haereticis*, Montfortius referred to Mt 10:16 (“I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves”) to compare heretics to sheep being persecuted by the Magistrate<sup>36</sup>. Both he and Kleinbergius implicitly suggested that the Genevan authorities are wolves too afraid of the Roman Catholic “lioness” to assault anyone but sheep (i.e. Servetus and the Anabaptists)<sup>37</sup>.

To which Bèze replies, on the one hand, by denying his opponents’ resort to the metaphor. He argues that the use against heretics of the sword God gave to the Magistrate does not make him a wolf<sup>38</sup>, and that those whom Bellius’s group describes as sheep are in fact the wolves threatening the herd of the faithful<sup>39</sup>. He focuses on the principle of Mt 7:15 (“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves”) as a tool of discursive reversal. On the other hand, Bèze stresses more the common semantics in his discourse. The *clementes* are said to be wolves hungry for souls<sup>40</sup>, “howling” their arguments<sup>41</sup> and

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<sup>33</sup> DHCMP, p. 105-106; TAMPH, p. 164.

<sup>34</sup> *Ex quo constat istorum simplicitatem et conscientiam nihil aliud esse quam personas, quas ad fallendos incautos induerunt. Nunc autem his detractis consideremus unde tandem ratiocinentur haereticos minime omnium hominum esse metuendos : [...].* (DHCMP, p. 94–95; TAMPH, p. 147.) Good examples of the common mask pull-off rhetoric can be found, i.a., among the libellers of the Catholic League – see Alexandre Goderniaux, “Le ‘voile commun à tous meschans’. La justification de l’intolérance par la rhétorique du dévoilement dans la polémique catholique (France et Pays-Bas habsbourgeois, 1580-1594)”, *Loxias-Colloques*, 18, 2001, <http://revel.unice.fr/symposia/actel/index.html?id=1822>. On Castellio’s *simplicitas*, which is part of his scepticism, see Stefania Salvadori, “Socrate contre Aristote. Sébastien Castellion et la discussion sur les modèles rhétoriques”, in Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud (dir.), *Sébastien Castellion*, Paris, Garnier, 2013, p. 377-381.

<sup>35</sup> Systematism in the scholastic *refutatio* structure, argument after argument, lends itself well to the unveiling process.

<sup>36</sup> DHSP, p. 146; THSP, p. 165.

<sup>37</sup> DHSP, p. 134, 138; THSP, p. 153, 157.

<sup>38</sup> DHCMP, p. 247-248; TAMPH, p. 390-391.

<sup>39</sup> DHCMP, p. 210-211; TAMPH, p. 331-332.

<sup>40</sup> *Rapaces lupos; sitim nocendi inexplebilem; vos lupos illos graves et famelicos; fideles [...] ex vestris faucibus ereptos.* (DHCMP, p. 42-43, 96-97, 100, 200; TAMPH, p. 63, 150, 155, 314-315.)

<sup>41</sup> DHCMP, p. 97; TAMPH, p. 150.

trying to substitute for the pastors<sup>42</sup>; on the contrary, Magistrates and ministers are depicted in a compliant manner as faithful dogs and shepherds protecting the sheep<sup>43</sup>. The most elaborate use of the metaphor allows Bèze to counter the well-known parable of the “white robes” (*vestes albas*) found in the preface to the first *De haereticis*: Christ asked humans to wear them, which means living together in piety and friendship without contentions<sup>44</sup>. Bèze effectively flips the image: so-called sheep become “those white wolves” (*albos istos lupos*) threatening the souls of the faithful from inside the herd, all ready to jump on them to feast<sup>45</sup>. He also gives his own definition of the white robe: the *clementes*’ plea that one should not punish but even reward they who endanger men’s salvation, a claim by which they show all their hate for mankind<sup>46</sup>. In other words, the white robe shows an appearance of piety but hides the rage of wolves. This follows the Erasmian logic of the “inverted Silenus” Bèze had already used in previous works<sup>47</sup>: while Silenus is a wise man of ugly looking, he becomes attractive while masking his true, vile nature. The discrepancy between outer and inner self and their inversion or reversal are at the core of the rhetoric of the mask. The image of the Devil follows the same vein.

## Devils in disguise

Both parties also resort to demonization. In Christianity, the image of the Devil is used to designate otherness and to define oneself in relation to it<sup>48</sup>. Bellius associated the *inclementes* with the Devil: they are worse than Satan himself, because he would not persecute in the name of Christ as they do; they must either think of Christ as some Moloch who wants his worshippers to be burned as offering, or as the Devil, whose nature is to burn Christians<sup>49</sup>.

Once again, Bèze undertakes to turn Bellius’s discourse against him while amplifying it. According to him, the worst evil one should fear is Satan, disguised as God, operating with full licence inside the true Church – in other words the internal corruption of doctrine: here lies the whole danger of the mask, and the need to unveil what is concealed<sup>50</sup>. To this end, the Devil secretly dispatches (*summittit*) his

<sup>42</sup> DHCMP, p. 160; TAMPH, p. 250.

<sup>43</sup> DHCMP, p. 117; TAMPH, p. 182.

<sup>44</sup> DSHP, p. 3-5; THSP, p. 11-13.

<sup>45</sup> DHCMP, p. 40, 83-84, 26-270; TAMPH, p. 59, 129, 426-427.

<sup>46</sup> *Humanitatem exuitis, dico, quia summo humani generis odio teneatur necesse est qui infensissimos hominum salutis hostes non modo non coerendos, sed etiam honore afficiendos putet. Haec vestra simplicitas est, vestra conscientia, vestra innocentia, vestra probitas et clementia: haec denique vestra alba vestis est, qua luporum rabiem ac sitim nocendi inexplebilem occultatis.* (DHCMP, p. 96-97; TAMPH, p. 150.)

<sup>47</sup> E.g., in the *Abraham sacrificant* (1550), Satan is dressed in a monk’s robe. The *Satyres chrestiennes de la cuisine papale* (1560) attributed to Bèze also refer to a robe of affected virtue: “L’aube et le surpli [qui] denote/Vie sans macule et sans note”. See Ruth Stawarz-Luginbühl, *Un théâtre de l’épreuve*, Geneva, Droz, 2012, p. 154.

<sup>48</sup> Irena Backus, « Connaître le diable : évolution du savoir relatif au diable d’Augustin à Martin del Rio », in Pascale Hummel & Frédéric Gabriel (eds), *La mesure du savoir*, Paris, Philologicum, 2007, p. 33-54 ; « Introduction : Le diable vagabond », in Grégoire Holtz & Thibaut Maus de Rolley (eds), *Voyager avec le diable*, Paris, PUPS, 2008, p. 19.

<sup>49</sup> DHSP, p. 7, 26-28 ; THSP, p. 15, 30-32.

<sup>50</sup> *Corrupta vero doctrina, et ita quidem corrupta ut sub Dei specie diabolus lateat, ecquid tandem superest nisi ut plurimi pro Deo diabolum amplectantur, plurimi, spe cognoscendae veritatis abjecta,*



henchmen (*Satanae emissarii*), i.e. heretics and the *clementes*, to overthrow the foundations of religion<sup>51</sup>. In accordance with Protestant literature indeed<sup>52</sup>, Satan never acts by himself, but *personatus*, “masked”, which means through his agents (2 Cor 11:13–15). Servetus’s depiction in the Bezan *De haereticis* offers a striking example of polemical demonization: whatever the resemblance at first sight between his death and the pyres of the martyrs, their *cause* distinguishes them, as Servetus did not have faith in the true Christ, but in an idol. Bèze thus undertakes to reveal Servetus not as a “true martyr of God”, but as a “martyr of the Devil”<sup>53</sup>. Besides, devils and heretics are brought together. According to the reformer, they both can have the knowledge of God, but not faith: they cannot be among the elect<sup>54</sup>. Adducing 1 Tim 1:20, in which Paul writes to have handed heretics over to Satan, Bèze expresses an exclusivist conception of the *corpus Christianum* by asserting that everyone who is expelled from the Church is abandoned to Satan’s power<sup>55</sup>. Like Bellius, Bèze declares his adversaries to be worse than the Devil himself<sup>56</sup>. He underlines the assertion of the *clementes* that the knowledge of God is not needed to gain salvation: he who does not understand the essence of faith can only be a devil; indeed, even devils could not conceive such heresy – so what to say about such men who publish books to claim that<sup>57</sup>? As for their exegesis, the Devil can quote Scripture for his own purpose, as the proverb says, and so do the *patrones clementiae*, Bèze states. But in doing so the henchmen surpass their master, as they invoke the authority of Scripture without even a quote<sup>58</sup>. If the *clementes* are worse than the Devil himself, what more is there to fear?

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*omnem religionem abjiciant, horrenda denique in Ecclesia Dei perturbatio exoritur? Est enim longe gravissimum hoc malum, quum transformatus Satan intra ipsa Ecclesiae viscera grassatur.* (DHCMP, p. 184-185 ; TAMPH, p. 289-290.)

<sup>51</sup> DHCMP, p. 133 ; TAMPH, p. 207.

<sup>52</sup> See Claude Blum, « Le Diable comme masque. L’évolution de la représentation du Diable à la fin du Moyen Âge et au début de la Renaissance », in M.T. Jones-Davies (dir.), *Diable, diables et diableries au temps de la Renaissance*, Paris, Touzot, 1988, p. 149-164.

<sup>53</sup> *Habet enim, si nescis, etiam diabolus suos martyres [...]*. (DHCMP, p. 72 ; TAMPH, p. 110-111.) See Aurélien Bourgaux, « Exclure l’hérésie, bâtir l’orthodoxie selon Théodore de Bèze (*De haereticis*, 1554) », in *MethIS*, 7, 2022, <https://popups.uliege.be/2030-1456/index.php?id=514>.

<sup>54</sup> I.a., DHCMP, p. 61 ; TAMPH, p. 92-93. Bèze also implies that, by putting on the mask of the Devil, the *clementes* themselves become Satan. (DHCMP, p. 210; TAMPH, p. 331.)

<sup>55</sup> DHCMP, p. 185 ; TAMPH, p. 290-291. See also his *Confession de la foy chrestienne* ([Geneva], Conrad Badius, 1559, p. 233), in which Maruyama finds Bèze’s conception of the *corpus Christianum*. (*The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza. The Reform of the True Church*, Geneva, Droz, 1978, p. 7, 32.) However, one can see here that it is expressed in the *De haereticis* already.

<sup>56</sup> Satan’s spies were commonly depicted as worse than their master. One can find this build-up, e.g., in Bèze’s *Abraham sacrificiant*. (Jean-Claude Carron, « Abraham sacrificiant de Théodore de Bèze. Exil et propagande évangéliques au XVIe siècle », *RHT*, 54, 2004, p. 85.)

<sup>57</sup> *Ut qui eius cognitionem dicat necessariam non esse ad salutem per fidem obtinendam, aut si sciatur, meliores homines non reddere, quae sit fidei materia et substantia ignoret, vere diabolus sit non homo, ut qui Spiritum sanctum tanquam garrulum ac importunum accuset. Id autem quum non sine horrore vel ab ipsis diabolis cogitari possit, quid de vobis sentiendum qui editis etiam libris id aidetis affirmare ?* (DHCMP, p. 50; TAMPH, p. 74-75.)

<sup>58</sup> DHCMP, p. 134–135; TAMPH, p. 210-211.

## Masks and fear

Both processes of veiling and unveiling are tied close to a frightening discourse. In the Bezan *De haereticis*, fear plays three distinct roles: discrediting the opponent, frightening them, and targeting the reader for polarization effects and as a call to action<sup>59</sup>.

Firstly, Bèze argues that fear is one of the main reasons the *clementes* did resort to masks. Intertwining the rhetoric with accusations of cowardice allows him to vilify them and their doctrine, as they are said not brave enough to stand publicly for it: Bellius wears a mask (*personatus*) because he was afraid to be publicly exposed<sup>60</sup>; the lack of allusion to the papacy and its tyranny is grounded by the fear of repression<sup>61</sup>; the names of the cities the *clementes* refer to are omitted for the same reason<sup>62</sup>. Distress is also invoked to deny that Servetus died showing constancy, as a true martyr of God would<sup>63</sup>. Thus, in Bèze's discourse, falsity, which was supposed to cover fear, ends up revealing it.

Fear also seems to be Bèze's way to compensate his doubt regarding the identity of his opponents. He repeatedly threatens to disclose them and takes care to leave the uncertainty open: what if he knows? In fact, he claims to know the names of two of the *clementes* but says he does not want to reveal it to avoid "contaminating" his book<sup>64</sup>. This vague statement allows him to avoid risking a mistake while maintaining the threat over all his opponents. Moreover, his phrasing intentionally suggests that he is aware of Montfortius's identity: the latter is all too well known among those against whom he wrote<sup>65</sup>; he mocks with impunity the faithful of England whose good graces he recently sought in his prefaces<sup>66</sup>. Those clues provided for the reader invite him to expose who hides behind the mask. The conclusion of the treatise attempts to turn their so-called falseness against the *clementes* one last time:

For even though you carefully conceal your names, your style, and the name of that town in which your collection (*farrago*) was published, as many other books that are not worth much better, your impudence, your desire for novelty and your pretence come forth. Therefore, everyone understands both who you are and what you plan to do<sup>67</sup>.

The last sentence sounds like a threat: everyone is able to unmask them. Bèze thus places himself in a position of strength by acting as if he chose to leave the

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<sup>59</sup> On such uses of emotions in polemics, see Ruth Amossy, *Apologie de la polémique*, Paris, PUF, 2014.

<sup>60</sup> DHCMP, p. 6; TAMPH, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> DHCMP, p. 160; TAMPH, p. 251.

<sup>62</sup> DHCMP, p. 89; TAMPH, p. 139.

<sup>63</sup> DHCMP, p. 99; TAMPH, p. 154.

<sup>64</sup> DHCMP, p. 88; TAMPH, p. 136-137.

<sup>65</sup> DHCMP, p. 6; TAMPH, p. 7. This could relate to Castellio's stay in Geneva (1541–1545), but Bèze most likely thinks to Curione, whom he told Bullinger was hiding behind Montfortius. Curione had indeed taught in Lausanne in 1542–1546. (DHNP, p. 23-24.)

<sup>66</sup> DHCMP, p. 177; TAMPH, p. 277. Both Castellio and Curione had dedicated some of their works to Edward VI. (DHNP, p. 23-24.)

<sup>67</sup> *Nam ut vestra nomina, ut orationis characterem, ut eius civitatis nomen in qua haec vestra edita est farrago, et multi praeterea non multo sane meliores libelli, studiose dissimuletis, tamen vestra vos impudentia, vestra novitatis affectatio, vestra simulatione prodit. Itaque et qui sitis, et quid paretis omnes intelligunt.* (DHCMP, p. 270; TAMPH, p. 427-428.)

advocates of leniency under the protection of false names but could pull off their masks at any moment. In truth, while reproaching factual concealing, he does not undertake to lift it.

Thirdly, the rhetoric of the mask seeks to inspire fear and disgust in the reader. Devils and wolves play a part, but one could also look at the omnipresent semantics of heresy as poison, plague and gangrene on the verge of spreading in the *corpus Christianum*<sup>68</sup>: these frightening images illustrate the accusation of subversion. The idea that the *clementes* undermine religion and political order to their foundations forms a recurrent theme throughout the text. Indeed, according to Bèze, they not only defend Servetus and the Anabaptists, but also downplay the crimes those heretics stood accused of (anti-Trinitarianism, Anabaptism, sedition, etc.). Moreover, Bèze considers the statements of the *clementes* on Trinity, scepticism and other problematic positions as highly heretical. He raises the alarm bell:

But you even make the knowledge of Trinity to be as useless, certainly so that nothing might be left safe in the Christian religion. [...] Therefore, what is left for us but to take you for new devils who undertake to throw off God himself from his throne<sup>69</sup>?

The last sentence is well representative of a polarization discourse, as it means that the *inclementes* cannot but reject their opponents – dialogue is impossible, one cannot reason with them<sup>70</sup>. The recurrent rhetorical question *quid superest?* and the charge of undermining religious foundations best stress the alarmist discourse<sup>71</sup>. The assault on doctrine poses the greatest threat. Indeed, heretics and their advocates are said to prey on the souls of the faithful<sup>72</sup>. Bèze calls them soul-destroyers (*animicidas*) and deduces that they are the cruel ones, not the *inclementes*<sup>73</sup>. Among the readers targeted, the Bezan treatise especially urges the magistrates to act against the *clementes*<sup>74</sup>. If the latter threaten the integrity of the Church, the Magistrate has the right and even the duty to repress them. Bèze thus asks the same treatment for the defenders of heresy as for the heretics, since the *clementes* are themselves heretics.

## Conclusion

In Bèze's *De haereticis*, the rhetoric of the mask emerges among discursive strategies as one including several others (accusation of falseness, demonization, frightening discourse, etc.) in a coherent whole. This rhetoric consists of two

<sup>68</sup> I.a., *contagiosi et capitali morbi ; lues ; pestes Ecclesiae ; gangraenas ; virus*. On the violence and exclusion conveyed by such discourse, see Anne-Marie Brenot, "La peste soit des huguenots. Étude d'une logique d'exécration au XVIIe siècle", *HES*, 11, 1992, 4, p. 553-570.

<sup>69</sup> *Sed et ipsam Trinitatis cognitionem vos quoque inutilem facitis, nempe nequid salui in Christiana religione supersit. [...] Itaque quid superest nisi ut vos pro novis diabolis habeamus qui Deum ipsum ex solio conentur deturbare ?* (DHCMP, p. 51 ; TAMP, p. 76.)

<sup>70</sup> On demonization and its polarization effects in polemics, see Ruth Amossy & Roselyne Koren, « La "diabolisation" : un avatar du discours polémique au prisme des présidentielles de 2007 », *Au corps du texte*, Paris, Champion, 2010, p. 219-236 ; Ruth Amossy, *Apologie de la polémique*, Paris, PUF, 2014, p. 63.

<sup>71</sup> DHCMP, p. 50–51, 54, 65 ; TAMP, p. 74-76, 80, 100. Bèze had already expressed this concern to Bullinger. (L. 42 to Bullinger, 29 March 1553, in *Corr.*, 1, p. 123 ; L. 44 to Bullinger, 7 May 1554, in *Corr.*, 1, p. 127.)

<sup>72</sup> I.a., DHCMP, p. 96-97 ; TAMP, p. 150.

<sup>73</sup> DHCMP, p. 100, 158 ; TAMP, p. 156, 247.

<sup>74</sup> I.a., DHCMP, p. 83-84, 178, 199 ; TAMP, p. 129-131, 278, 312-313.

intertwined processes. The first is to gather both factual and fictional (or interpretative) charges of concealing – fake names and omissions are factual, whereas the assertion of veiled intentions is the author’s own making. Hammering these accusations home further justifies the urge to pull off the mask, which is the second face (or phase, although both are processed all at once) of its rhetoric. Unmasking does not operate on an objective basis – although factual concealing is denounced, it remains undisclosed – but follows the same wire as masking: the veil does not reveal facts but otherness<sup>75</sup>, in its most despicable form. That is, in Bèze’s terms, heretics undermining doctrine and threatening souls. Therefore, the rhetoric of the mask has two faces: veiling and unveiling.

The discursive strategies examined in this paper are not exhaustive: one could also have looked deeper at the semantics of blindness, the disqualification based on incompetence in exegesis and textual analysis, etc. But the images of wolves and devils best illustrate the reversal aspect of the rhetoric of the mask. Indeed, the unveiling discourse fuels a dynamic of inversion. Asking “that one have more consideration for sheep than wolves<sup>76</sup>” may suit both Bellius’s and Bèze’s call, but the rhetoric takes care to set it in Bèze’s terms. The reformer thus inverts the core accusation of cruelty in the polemic: the *clementes* prove to be the cruel ones, not the *inclementes*<sup>77</sup>. Also echoing the anti-Silenus trope, Bellius’s well-known “golden coin” is displayed as counterfeited as it is turned into lead<sup>78</sup>. Piety is turned into heresy, gentleness into cruelty, and freedom into public licence. In his response to Bèze’s *De haereticis*, Montfortius-Castellio will criticize this *ars dicendi* of reversal<sup>79</sup>. Wolves’ and devils’ metaphors are not only reversed but also emphasized by rhetorical build-up: the polemist must strike back, harder<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>75</sup> “The mask is not thought as what it hides, what it masks, but as it gives something else to see than who it hides.” (Claude Blum, “Le Diable comme masque. L’évolution de la représentation du Diable à la fin du Moyen Âge et au début de la Renaissance”, in M.T. Jones-Davies (dir.), *Diable, diables et diableries au temps de la Renaissance*, Paris, Touzot, 1988, p. 149 – translation is mine.)

<sup>76</sup> DHCMP, p. 140; TAMPH, p. 219.

<sup>77</sup> Bèze goes so far as to invert the pattern of the pain during Servetus’s admonition by the ministers: as Servetus was standing on the pyre, it was not him who begged and wept, but the ministers trying to save his soul. (DHCMP: p. 99; TAMPH: p. 154.)

<sup>78</sup> DHCMP, p. 259-260; TAMPH, p. 409-411. According to Bellius, believing in the God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit along with respecting the Commandments form the sacred basis of Christianity, an *aurea moneta*: rather than arguing on the minting (condemning another Christian’s faith), men should agree on the gold as a universal currency. (DHSP, p. 18-20; THSP, p. 24-25.)

<sup>79</sup> *Ista nimirum est ars dicendi, Beza, quae vos ex superiore inferiorem, et ex inferiore superiorem causam facere docet, hoc est tenebras in lucem, et in tenebras lucem convertere.* (DHNP, p. 42.) Castellio accuses Bèze of *sophistica ars oratoria* and, in turn, attempts to reverse some of his discursive strategies, including Bèze’s accusation of neo-academism, i.e. scepticism. (See Stefania Salvadori, “Socrate contre Aristote. Sébastien Castellion et la discussion sur les modèles rhétoriques”, in Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud (dir.), *Sébastien Castellion*, Paris, Garnier, 2013, p. 371-392.)

<sup>80</sup> In 1559, Colladon will slightly emphasize Bèze’s rhetoric of the mask by carrying on with the demonization in his preface (TAMPH, ff. 2r-v, 4v, 6v-7r, 16r) and by making translation choices that feed into the semantics. Striking is his elaboration on soul trafficking (*innocentes animas per fraudem abductas nundinari*), which he compares to “maquignonnage” (horse-dealing) : “Car y a-il sacrilege plus grand et plus detestable que de seduire par fraude les pures ames simples et innocentes pour en faire traffique et marchandise, comme de bœufs et moutons, et mesme *farder et desguiser* la parole de Dieu *comme font les maquignons* ?”. (DHCMP, p. 119 ; TAMPH, p. 185 – underlining is mine.)

The rhetoric of the mask is instrumentalized in a frightening discourse. While vilifying the resort to factual concealing, fear proves to be a semiological tool, paradoxically revealing what was originally hidden because of it. Fear is also a way for Bèze to compensate for not lifting factual concealing by posing a constant threat of disclosing and thereby setting a balance of power. Devil's henchmen, white wolves, plague-bearers, subverters of doctrine, soul-destroyers: masks are manifold. The metaphors serve to didactically make the rhetoric manifest. All these hideous depictions warn the reader (the Magistrate included) to fear heretics and their schemes and encourages taking action against them. In this way, Bèze's rhetoric produces polarization effects, as it inspires hatred and full rejection of alterity<sup>81</sup>.

In summary, the specific significance of common rhetoric features in Bèze's *De haereticis* consists of legitimizing and promoting *inclementia* towards heretics, their *patrones* included. Although acknowledging Bèze's vehemence of tone, his intransigence regarding the doctrine, and above all his call to the killing of heretics, one should not get dragged into examining his discourse through the anachronistic prism of intolerance, because it would amount to failing to take the reformer's perspective into proper account (through the bias of historiography on Castellio). The *inclementes* defended a point of doctrine which had its own coherence, both theological and political – that is what Bèze wanted to demonstrate<sup>82</sup>. They were convinced of the supreme necessity to preserve the integrity of the Church, or else *quid superest?* Confronted with such threat, the polemist sets himself up as a master of masks, crafting them, leaving them in place or pulling them off as needed.

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<sup>81</sup> See also Aurélien Bourgaux, « Exclure l'hérésie, bâtir l'orthodoxie selon Théodore de Bèze (*De haereticis*, 1554) », *MethIS*, 7, 2022, <https://popups.uliege.be/2030-1456/index.php?id=514>.

<sup>82</sup> Odile Panetta, "Heresy and Authority in the thought of Théodore de Bèze", *R&R*, 45, 2022, 1, p. 68.

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