Keeping the Faith: The Story of a Seventeenth-Century Peddler and his Protestant Community

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On August 25, 1685, after a brief stay in Lyon, Huguenot Peddler Jean Giraud returned to his mountain community in La Grave. His arrival coincided with the sound of booming cannon, as companies of cavalry descended on the small towns and Protestant communities that dotted the valleys of the Hautes-Alpes. This military sweep was in anticipation of Louis XIV, the Sun King of France, issuing the Edict of Fontainebleau, revoking the Edict of Nantes and thereby officially banning Protestantism from France, which would happen just a few months later. In the weeks and months that followed provincial authorities carried out the king’s orders by installing dragoons in the homes of recalcitrant Protestants. Throughout, Giraud recorded a harrowing narrative of events in his livre de raison, an account book that merchants typically maintained for record keeping. There, he enumerated the arrests, book burnings, pillaging soldiers, and executions; what was, in effect, the full and crushing power of the state with all its resources brought to bear on Huguenot communities nestled within the numerous valleys high in the French Alps. The Revocation resulted in the mass exodus of Dauphiné’s Protestants, which included all the members of Giraud’s church. Many of these were merchant families,¹ who scattered to Europe and the Americas.

¹ Jacques Faucher, Pierre Gravier, Pierre Albert, Jacques Chicot, Paul Mallin, Jean Gallot, Jean Bouillet, and Jean Monet are identified as “marchands de la Grave” in church records for neighboring Mizoën. The same individuals are named in Giraud’s livre de raison as members of his Church in La Grave. Giraud does not mention Jean Bouillet, who is also a La Grave merchant listed in Mizoën church records, but does name other Bouillet family members in his list of La Grave church members. For Mizoën church records see Archives départementales d’Isère, Mizoën/Protestants. Baptêmes, mariages, sépultures. Coll. Départementale, last accessed September 20, 2014, http://www.archives-isere.fr/2369-registres-paroissiaux-et-d-etat-civil-de-l-isere.htm. Giraud also identifies La Grave church
seeking refuge in foreign lands.\(^2\) Giraud and his family were among those escaping to Geneva, carefully slipping through the narrow Alpine passes undetected. They were among the lucky ones; others, who were caught attempting the same, were sent to the galleys or publicly hanged, their severed heads then placed on pikes for all to see. These events, too, found their way into Giraud’s *livre de raison.*\(^3\)

Giraud was part of a community of peddlers, many of whom owned shops in nearby cities such as Lyon and Geneva, but maintained their homesteads in rural towns and villages in the French Alps.\(^4\) Their commercial activities meant frequent travel with business commitments, often putting them in contact with others beyond their rural orb. In such interactions, peddlers like Giraud encountered international clients and co-religionists, who shared their interests and tastes, both politically and culturally, despite differences in language, country of origin, and social class. The Alps were also home to numerous rural Protestants, many of whom fled Dauphiné in the wake of the Revocation or went underground, only to resurface years later during the Camisard revolt of 1702. Study of the material culture of Alpine Protestants, especially through the lens of a Dauphiné Peddler such as Giraud, both before and after the Revocation, sheds light on the transnational nature of Huguenot commercial traffic, and the cultural trends and political events, international as well as regional, possibly influencing Huguenot identity.

Giraud’s *livre de raison* was not so different from other merchant account books in that it detailed much of his routine business (mainly from the 1670s up until his escape to Switzerland in 1686), along with important family events like births, marriages, baptisms, and deaths. The account records and inventories that appear in Giraud’s *livre de raison* raise important questions regarding Giraud’s role as Alpine peddler and cultural mediator. Like other merchants from the Hautes-Alpes, Giraud’s peddling connected Alpine people to larger commercial networks. It was by way of peddlers like Giraud that Alpine residents learned of the outside world, and found new markets for their village products. In his interactions with fellow villagers, Giraud communicated an appreciation for art and music, proper standards of etiquette, and the importance of reading and learning. Giraud identified many books on history and literature in his inventories, but also a vast

\(^2\) According to Giraud, destinations included Winterthur in the Swiss canton of Zurich, Vevey in the canton of Bern, Geneva, London, Cassel in Hesse, Barret, Portugal and Cádiz, Spain, Ireland including Dublin, and the Carolinas.

\(^3\) Archives départementales d’Isère, IJ 1102.

number of religious texts that he must have carefully kept hidden during the
Revocation. Such care points to Giraud’s devotion to his faith and community.

In addition to a significant number of Bibles and devotional texts, Giraud’s
Vevey book inventory contained several works of political and religious
controversy. Huguenot refugees like Giraud struggled to make sense of events by
way of their own religious experiences and historical perspectives. Consequently,
works on political prophecy, the apocalypse, and Protestant history may have
spoken to a desire for divine explanation and purpose. Other political works,
including those by Whig authors, suggest that Giraud may have sympathized with
international Calvinists, who shared his political views and convictions. In all,
Giraud’s inventories expand our understanding of the cultural values and priorities
of an Alpine merchant and his religious community, demonstrating as well, by
Giraud’s example, the increasing cosmopolitanism and internationalism of the
Huguenot movement, as it sought to regroup and rebuild following the
Revocation.

Giraud’s peddling enterprise originated in his home town of La Grave, a
village situated high in the French Alps, along a trade circuit that linked Alpine
villagers to larger urban centers like Lyon, Grenoble, Geneva, and Turin. Giraud’s
records reveal that he sold hats, books, shoes, ladies accessories, and a wide range
of textile products. He harvested wood, stocked materials used for storing
significant quantities of grain, and owned livestock. An inventory of his personal
possessions at La Grave, drawn up around the time of the Revocation, reflects his
tastes and habits. Giraud was a peddler, so it is no surprise that he possessed many
chests, cabinets, and baskets, items useful for either storing or transporting
merchandise. He owned plumes, an inkstand and writing tables for maintaining

5 Listed in his accounts are damask, country cloth, gold and silver string, camelot
d’Hollande (a kind of Dutch cloth), London serge, ribbon, taffeta, silk, lace, leather, Indian
covers, and non-carded wool. Archives départementales d’Isere, IJ 1102. Laurence
Fontaine also identifies Giraud’s numerous possessions, including books, in her History of
Pedlars in Europe (1996), especially pages 107 and 177.
6 Giraud’s inventories suggest that he leased his wooded and lumbered fields right before
his flight from La Grave. Archives départementales d’Isere, IJ 1102.
7 Giraud’s inventories list 20 sacks used for storing grain. Giraud also claimed that the
soldiers stole 20 sacks of grain from his store house when they first arrived on his
property. Archives départementales d’Isere, IJ 1102.
8 Giraud owned sheep, which his sister sold for him at market. Other family members
also owned sheep. The extent of Giraud’s livestock and that of other family members is
unclear. Archives départementales d’Isere, IJ 1102.
9 Giraud also owned a garde-robe, furniture used for storing clothes. According to Daniel
Roche, cabinets and wardrobes, which were beginning to appear in inventories at this
time, illustrates the need for systems of organization that had emerged with increased
records and correspondence, and torches, candlesticks, lamps, and lanterns, no doubt for late night reading and travel. Along with standard farm implements, Giraud’s inventory lists a strange mix of odds and ends – rocking cradles, scrap metal, bird cages, weights and measures, multiple “diverse” pairs of shoes, carpentry tools, country cloth and rolls of linen, blankets, a cabinet of “diverse drug and medicines” pommels, ladies’ garments, carpets, tailor’s scissors, sieves, hammers and files, animal hair for padding materials, and numerous cauldrons.10 Such items conceivably reflected La Grave’s regional trade and consumption patterns.

Giraud’s entrepreneurial success afforded him comforts beyond other rural classes. In addition to the standard hearth cremaillière, or hook for hanging pots over the fireplace, Giraud owned a rotisserie and roaster for cooking meat, and two coquemarts, a kind of early modern kettle for boiling water.11 He owned several mattresses and two beds, one with red damask curtains, no doubt a sign of his wealth and rising status as well as his desire for comfort.12 Giraud’s tableware, which was fairly sizable and diverse, consisted of one crystal and four tin cups, porridge bowls, plates including soup plates (assiettes creuses), a marmite, platters, vinegar and olive oil decanters, a salt container, knives, four fourchettes, and over thirty spoons. The variety of tableware is indicative of eating habits involving multiple course meals, while table cloths and napkins, along with table decorations, suggests an appreciation for table etiquette. The presence of a barber’s basin, a “grand” mirror, and cleaning brushes, which can be found with his wardrobe, speak to the importance of personal cleanliness and appearance, which,

10 Such items were possibly used for a home workshop or may reflect regional trade patterns. Farm implements included plows (two airaires and two socs), trident, two sappes, a scraper, and hammers.

11 An eighteenth-century definition of coquemart may be found in Anotoine Furètière, Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots francais tant vieux que modernes, et les Terms de toutes les sciences et des Arts: Divise en trois Tomes (La Haye: Arnoed et Reinier Leers, 1701).

along with table manners, had become an increasing preoccupation of elites at this time.\textsuperscript{13}

Various cultural artifacts suggest Giraud was both curious and adventuresome. He owned a pair of pocket pistols, fencing swords, and halberd—the pistols likely provided protection while traveling, but fencing swords, were more typical of the aristocracy, or perhaps someone accustomed to ritualized codes for settling matters of personal or family honor.\textsuperscript{14} The halberd, the medieval-style fighting axe of the Swiss, was by the seventeenth century, at least for a peddler, more likely a show piece or marker of masculine identity. As the known weapon of the Swiss soldier, it might represent the freedom and independence historically associated with neighboring Swiss cities like Geneva. Giraud enjoyed games and was a collector of curiosities. He owned a game of checkers, “dames damier,” and two ostrich eggs, which were, as Michael Hunter has noted “the standard natural exotica of virtuoso cabinets at the time.”\textsuperscript{15} Giraud also enjoyed art and music, keeping several tableaux and stringed instruments, including two violins, a Vielle “with foot,” and a trumpet marine, a kind of triangular wooden stringed instrument that was popular during the Renaissance. As was typical of the Dutch Protestants, Giraud preferred natural rather than religious themes for his works of art: his inventory lists three landscapes and seven pictures of the \textit{Seven Wonders of the World}.

Above all, Giraud treasured books, and went to great lengths to protect them. On July 9, 1685, the King issued an \textit{arrêt} directed against printers and booksellers, calling for the confiscation of Protestant works.\textsuperscript{16} The Count de Taissay posted orders on La Grave’s church doors instructing Protestants to hand over controversial works within twenty-four hours or face corporal punishment. Local priests, including the \textit{curé}, Claude Planchet, began confiscating and publicly burning Huguenot texts at \textit{La Pierre des Oizaux}. Simultaneously, the priest of Mont-de-Lans collected and burned at Mont-de-Lans, Freney, Cuculet, and other towns “all the subjects at the parish known – Bibles, Testaments, prayers, sermons


\textsuperscript{14} Robert Nye has suggested that the French middle class may have been adopting the aristocratic custom of the duel at this time. Robert A. Nye, \textit{Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 8.


... and all sorts of books” of faith. Meanwhile, Giraud scrambled to safeguard works from local authorities by hiding “various printed books on our religion” in his chamber de panier and in the pavilion, where he tended his garden. Another forty books, along with a three volume set of the History of the Reformed faith and a copy of L'Anatomie de la Messe (Anatomy of the Mass) he left with Monsieur Louis Aymons, presumably a trusted neighbor.17 Giraud departed for Switzerland in disguise shortly thereafter.18

According to historian Laurence Fontaine, a vast book-trade network originating in the Alpine Briçonnais established itself shortly after the Reformation with commercial ties linking Alpine peddlers and markets to urban booksellers in Lyon and Geneva. Giraud himself became an important dealer for Dauphiné’s Protestant book market by the late seventeenth century, receiving most of his texts through contacts with Genevan publishers, who brokered sales with Dutch and German suppliers.19 Except for mention of a Bible and a book of Psalms he purchased for his niece, Giraud left no indication in his accounts of the volume of books he trafficked, nor can we be certain in the kinds of books he bought and sold, although the great majority of titles he hid at the time of the Revocation were religious ones. Books listed in Giraud’s La Grave inventory included one historical dictionary, a three volume history of Jacob Spon’s Voyage D’Italie, De Dalmatie, De Grece, et Du Levant, Spon’s Histoire de Geneve (Two Volumes), a History of Alexander the Great, a History of Lyon, four volumes of du Bartas and the works of Bazaume. In contrast to Giraud’s hidden books, none of the works listed in Giraud’s La Grave inventory were controversial even though one author, Jacob Spon, a celebrated classicist and respected physician, would take refuge abroad for refusing to abjure his faith.20

The inventory of books included in Giraud’s live de raison and recorded in his hand in 1702, sixteen years after his flight to Vevey and probably close to the time of his death, is even more revealing with respect political and intellectual interests. Giraud arrived in Geneva and then Vevey, Switzerland with his wife and daughter in September of 1686. They were among nine hundred other Huguenot

17 I’m assuming Giraud is referring to Pierre du Moulin’s work, Anatomy de Masse, which went through numerous editions.
18 Giraud does not provide a figure for the total number of books burned. He does, however, estimate the number collected in Mizoën, Besses, and Clavelles to be at least 10 pack mules, or 20 balles of mules, “vingt balles mullets.” The priests had not yet burned these books on the day of Giraud’s departure, July 24, 1686. His account of the book burning is in Giraud’s livre de raison. Archives départementales d’Isère, IJ 1102
19 Fontaine, History of Pedlars, 58.
20 The Huguenot Jacob Spon died in Vevey, Switzerland on December 25, 1685, not long after taking refuge there.
refugees who arrived in this small town on the eastern shore of Lake Geneva.\textsuperscript{21} It is not clear why Giraud settled in Vevey other than the town of a few thousand was situated in Bern, one of the Swiss Cantons that welcomed and gave sanctuary to Huguenot refugees fleeing France. Its location outside the municipal jurisdiction of Geneva made it free from the powerful guilds and municipal authorities known for their restrictive corporate controls.\textsuperscript{22} The political protection Giraud found in Vevey allowed him to live free of state pressure and interference and afforded him the economic freedom essential for rebuilding his life as a merchant in watchmaking tools and women’s accessories.\textsuperscript{23}

Giraud’s book inventory for Vevey points to an international clientele that was well-travelled and well-educated, especially in topics of contemporary politics and history. A Dutch travel guide, for instance, suggests that, though mountain dwellers, Giraud’s clientele was not isolated. Published in the early eighteenth century, it provides a highly detailed step-by-step guide in terms of street names, international flags, and other identity markers to assist in commercially navigating oneself about Amsterdam.\textsuperscript{24} Likewise, the account book on tariffs and tonnage is also meant for the foreign traveler or merchant who seeks direction for determining tariffs set by varying international standards for calculation. Both cases reflect a client base that was mobile, commercial, and experienced in international travel and exchange.

Giraud’s dealing in books on history and politics indicate his customers had an interest in matters of state.\textsuperscript{25} A few of these texts Giraud lists as books of


\textsuperscript{23} Archives départementales d’Isere, IJ 1102


\textsuperscript{25} Giraud’s appreciation for historical topics is re-experienced in Vevey. Among the historical works discovered in Giraud’s Vevey book inventory are Pierre du Moulin’s \textit{La Vie et Religion de Deux Bons Papes, Leon Premier et Gregoire Premie}, the anonymous
“controversy,” suggesting that he was well aware that the possession and circulation of such books was illegal and dangerous, at least in France.26 By far the greatest number of works in Giraud’s possession carried religious themes, indicating as well the continuing relevance of faith and the critical importance of the book trade to the French Protestant community in the years following the Revocation. The majority of Giraud’s Vevey books are devotional pieces – many sermons, editions of the New Testament, the Psalms, the Anglican liturgy, and other works on prophecy, Reformed Church Discipline, Christian faith and virtue, and religious conscience. In terms of age, Giraud’s books span over 150 years with the earliest copyright set at 1543, the latest at 1705. The copyright date, publisher, and city of origin for most of the works are not listed, although Geneva, Amsterdam, London, Louvain, Saumur, and Charenton figure as publishing centers among those that do. Of those texts that are identified, it would seem that most were published in the latter decades of the seventeenth century. Almost all the books had French titles, and most had subjects that either related to French history, politics, or the Reformed faith.27

Nowhere in his livre de raison did Giraud explain his political beliefs. The books that appear in his inventory in 1702, just sixteen years after his flight, nonetheless, provide some indication of his political leanings and possibly that of his clientele. Giraud’s list suggests a renewed interest in monarchomach authors. In addition to a “work of controversy” by the author of the Vindicia Contra Tyrannos, Philippe du Plessis Mornay, may be found the anti-Catholic Metamorphoses de la Religion Romaine by the notorious double agent Huguenot spy, Jean Aymon, and Gatien de Courtizl de Sandras’ L’Alcoran de Louis XIV, or in English, The Koran of Louis XIV, a polemical dialogue against Louis XIV. Polemical works of this kind signal an important turning point in Huguenot politics. Clearly gone are the Huguenot apologists of the past, who supported the

Relation en Abrege De ce qui s’est passé de plus remarquable dans le retour Des Vaudois au Piémont, Lactance’s Histoire de la Mort des Persecuteurs de l’Eglise Primitive translated into French from the English version by Gilbert Burnet, and presumably Pierre Jurieu’s Abrégé de l’Histoire Du Concile de Trente. Works of historical fiction included Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy’s Histoire de Jean de Bourbon and Jean de Préchac’s Le Comte Tekely, Nouvelle historique.

26 Books of controversy Giraud cites include Un livre de controverse par Philipe de Mornay Seigneur du Plessy contre un Jesuite, Un livre de controverse d’Eglise protestants, and Un livre controverse response au livre de monsieur Condon. No place, publisher, or date of publication are provided for these sources.

27 Those works not relating to French history, politics, or the Reformed Church included one Catholic version of the New Testament and Paraphrase des Pseaumes de David by the Bishop of Grasse, Anthoine Godeau.
Bourbon monarch as their protector.\textsuperscript{28} Louis XIV, now the focus of Huguenot animus, was considered as much a threat to Protestantism and Christian civilization as the pope had been for decades previously.

Equally provocative are works on political prophecy. Reminiscent of earlier English radicalism, the apocalyptic works of Pierre du Moulin, Pierre Jurieu, and Huguenot physician Jacques Massard, attest to the appeal of Huguenot millennialism, despite the critical tendencies of some Huguenot exiles.\textsuperscript{29} Further study may reveal the pivotal role peddlers like Giraud played as disseminators of apocalyptic belief. What bearing, if any, for example, Giraud’s activities had on Isabeau Vincent or the movement of the Minor Prophets, especially given the proximity of such movements to Giraud’s book trade, merits further examination.

Works by Whig authors, including two sermons by William of Orange’s personal chaplain, Gilbert Burnet, Rendre Grasses (sic) à Dieu de la Deliverance de la conspiration contre le Roy guillaume (Give Thanks to God for the Deliverance from the Conspiracy Made against King William) and, most important, Sermon prononcé sur le couronnement du Roy guillaume par la Docteur Burnett (A Sermon Preached at the Coronation of William III and Mary II, King and Queen of England), also figure among Giraud’s books,\textsuperscript{30} as does the Cabinet des Jesuites by Titus Oates, the Popish-plot conspirator whose infamous allegations fueled London’s anti-Catholicism in the years leading up to the Glorious Revolution. Why Giraud kept such titles remains a mystery, though one possibility might be that his clientele included English exiles, who had also sought refuge in Vevey during the Stuart Restoration.\textsuperscript{31} The combination of Whig and Huguenot authors adds


\textsuperscript{30} Other works include Gilbert Burnet’s translation of Lactance’s A History of the death of the Persecutors of the Early Church, a copy of the English (Anglican) liturgy, and La Sonde de la conscience by English minister Daniel Dyke.

\textsuperscript{31} Vevey was home to prominent English regicides Edmund Ludlow, William Cawley, and John Phelps, who took refuge there following the English Restoration. Edmund Ludlow, whose memoirs were published in Vevey in 1689 and 1699, remained in Vevey until his
credibility to the claim that the Revocation served as a rallying cry for the Whig cause. As historian Geoffrey Adams has put it, “Jurieu,” himself, “was convinced that the survival of European Protestantism was linked to the destiny of William of Orange.”

Along with his book lists, Giraud provides a tally of Huguenot refugees near the end of his livre de raison. Giraud itemizes all those in his church by name who fled, along with his or her final destination. He also identifies those who died. This table would seem to be serving an additional purpose of maintaining a history of church membership. Interestingly, Giraud’s livre de raison sheds light on the ways he interpreted his role in relation to other church members, who were mainly merchants from La Grave. Giraud may have seen himself as a sort of paterfamilias of his community, providing financial support to church members, while also maintaining correspondence with them in the event La Grave’s church would be resurrected after the Revocation. It would seem that Giraud considered the events surrounding the Revocation important enough to record and used his livre de raison to preserve the history of his church during the Revocation for both himself and future generations.

Giraud’s material world challenges Weber’s widely known and contested argument that the Calvinist work ethic encouraged ascetic living. On the contrary, though a religious man, Giraud was not an ascetic. He enjoyed games, lived comfortably, appreciated the arts, and took pleasure in fine dining. Giraud valued personal appearance and cleanliness, and was a man of honor. All the while, he projected an aura of sophistication through his books, artwork, and musical instruments. Giraud was an intellectual and a collector and, judging from his choice in texts, likely believed the humanities were important for shaping moral character. He may have additionally entertained an interest in natural studies, as was represented by his ostrich eggs. Most important, Giraud fancied himself a proud and respectable pillar of his community, who possessed more than just financial wherewithal. Giraud was a deeply religious and conscientious man — a man of conviction — who sought to convey through his dress, habits, and material surroundings, proper etiquette and cultivation, orderliness, and restraint, traits appropriate for someone of his social standing and strong faith.

deed in 1693. As some of these regicides and their attendant networks were still active at the time Giraud arrived in 1686, it is not inconceivable that Giraud may have entered their social orb. The presence of Whig authors in Giraud’s inventories suggests as well that Vevey, so close to Geneva, may have served as a geopolitical crossroads for traffic in controversial works. See Barbara Taft, “Return of a Regicide: Edmund Ludlow and the Glorious Revolution,” History 76 (June 1991): 197 – 220.

32 Adams, The Huguenots, 10.
33 Fontaine, History of Pedlars, 56 and 108.
As a merchant-peddler, Giraud’s commercial commitments required him to travel to cities like Lyon and Geneva, where he encountered others who shared his values and sensibilities. The cosmopolitan nature of many of Giraud’s books and personal possessions suggests intercontinental interactions, such as with the international book trade, which likely connected him to countries known for their opposition to Bourbon France, such as England and the Dutch Republic. Although Giraud's actual role in the Huguenot diaspora, beyond recording its history, remains unknown, he likely used his international contacts to secure safe passage and resettlement for fellow church members. Under such circumstances, Giraud would have certainly entertained political issues of international consequence. One may speculate as well that while in exile, Giraud’s readership mostly comprised Huguenot refugees, as nearly all the titles appearing in the Vevey book inventory were in French, including those by Whig authors. The numerous Whig and anti-Bourbon titles, additionally points to a readership with an emerging political sense that possibly found common cause with co-religionists outside France.

In all, Giraud’s *livre de raison* provides an interesting snapshot into the evolving community of discourse that characterized a Huguenot community during the Revocation. Vevey’s book titles speak especially to the anguish of a community that sought understanding, renewed meaning, and political direction at a critical moment in its history. Ideas from the English, Dutch, Italian, as well as one woman author,34 former Huguenot leaders, apocalyptic preachers and prophets, political commentators, and historians coalesced to give meaning and assuage psychological anxiety. Giraud’s physical church building in La Grave was destroyed, but its people, Giraud’s community, continued to thrive. Giraud and his community would endeavor to sustain long-standing ties, while forging new meaning and direction from the remnants left behind. As a cultural intermediary, Giraud played an important role in framing and communicating refugee experiences stemming from the Revocation and the near annihilation of the Huguenot community among common Alpine people both before and after their diasporic experiences.

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34 Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's *Histoire de Jean de Bourbon* appears among Giraud's works.