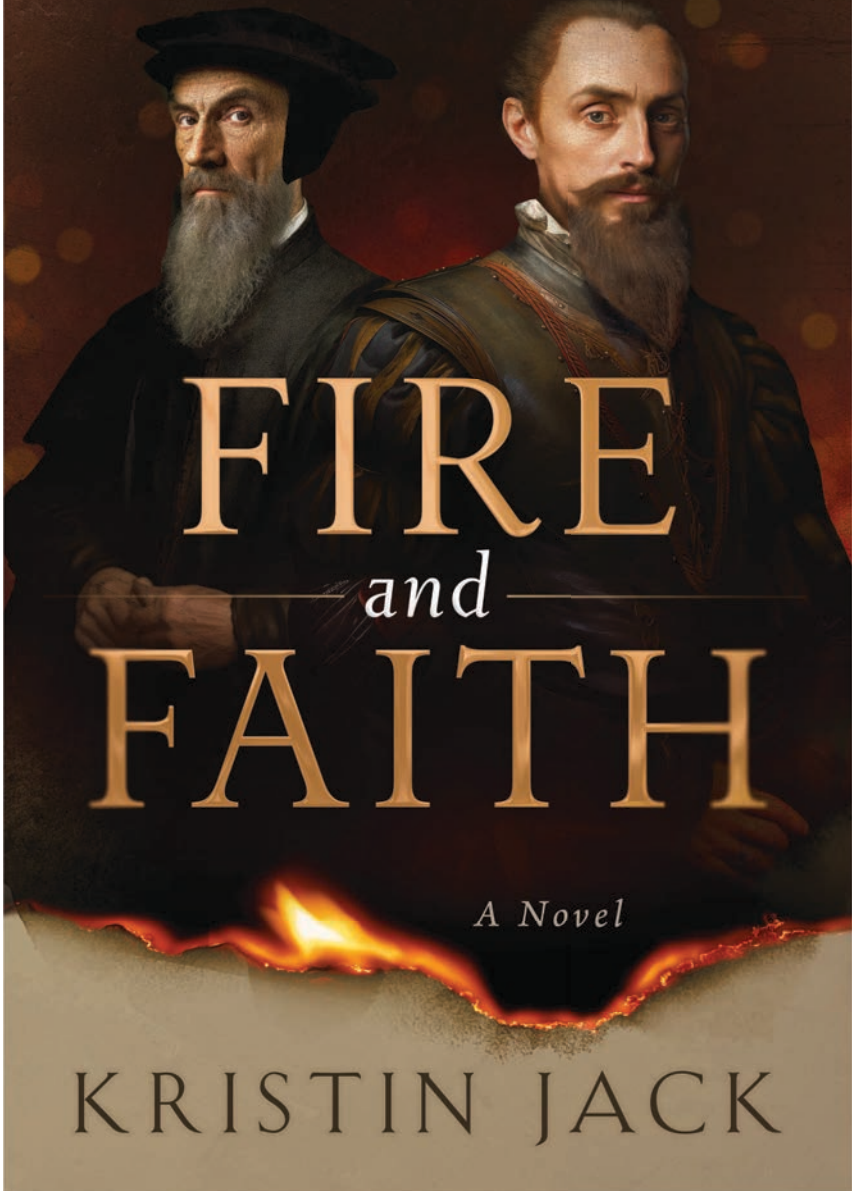


THE UNTOLD STORY OF SEBASTIAN CASTELLIO'S
EPIC BATTLE WITH JOHN CALVIN



CLICK A BUTTON TO PURCHASE



amazon



other stores

Praise for *Fire and Faith*

“This is the story of a man who championed free speech in the time of religious turmoil that led to the Hundred Years War. Despite the persecutions of John Calvin, who declared him a heretic and caused his immiseration, theologian and scholar Sebastian Castellio never wavered in his determination to challenge authoritarian claims to one truth. This 16th century tale resonates even today when free speech comes under threat again.”

— **Dr. Philip Temple ONZM**, author of the Ernest Scott History Prize-winning book *A Sort of Conscience, The Wakefields*.

“Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it. The story of Sebastian Castellio has mostly been lost to the passage of time but is urgently relevant to the challenges we face in the world today. Read it and prepare to be deeply impacted by the character and vision of this man. This is timeless wisdom.”

— **Craig Greenfield**, founder of Alongsiders Int. and author of *Subversive Jesus*.

“Once I started reading, I couldn’t stop. I was caught up in the astonishing story of a 16th century scholar who marshaled his intelligence and courage to engage a world in which the righteous gave no quarter, but slaughtered one another in the name of God. I was captivated.”

— **Dave Andrews**, author of *Christianarchy* and *Compassionate Community Work*.

“A beautiful retelling of how one extraordinary man stood against the exploding violence of 16th century Europe. Wonderful!”

— **Richard Rohr**, Franciscan priest and author of *Falling Upward*.

“This is a riveting historical reconstruction of the life of Sebastian Castellio, a voice of humane Christianity in an era of relentless bloodshed undertaken by church and state. The book brings that awful era to light most vividly, and will inspire me and many others to want to honor the work of Castellio. Brilliant!”

— **David Gushee**, Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics and author of *After Evangelicalism*.

“Thanks to Kristin Jack’s exhaustive research and masterful storytelling, Castellio’s voice can once again be heard. The timing could not be better. This book about a long-forgotten reformer has the power to spark a new, much-needed reformation.”

— **Jason Porterfield**, author of *Fight Like Jesus*.

“Castellio may be one of the less familiar figures of the early Reformation, but his courageous witness to religious liberty in an era of dogmatism and persecution shines through this well-researched, creative and engaging historical novel.”

— **Dr. Stuart Murray Williams**, author of *The Naked Anabaptist*.

Fire and Faith

*The Untold Story of Sebastian Castellio's Epic
Battle with John Calvin*

Kristin Jack



Chapter 1

The Burning

Basel, the Swiss Confederacy, May 13, 1559

Sebastian Castellio positioned himself as far to the edge of the crowd as he could, closest to the path that led home. He stole a glance to his left and saw anxious faces drawn with uncertainty. He and his fellow Baseliers—neighbors and colleagues—had been gathered for an hour in the warm morning air, listening to speeches denouncing a man two years dead. A man they looked up to and loved dearly. Sebastian knew that almost no one—not even the majority of those on the hastily built stage—was here by choice. Each had received an order from the city’s council to come. To have refused would have invited terrible suspicion. The fact that they had been summoned here by name revealed that they were already in grave danger.

In the courtyard of the Steinentor, the city’s southwestern gate, Sebastian shifted his weight from one foot to the other. Against the beige wall, a timber stage had been built, now occupied by a dozen throne-like chairs. Each chair held a grim-faced patrician, all dressed in black, each man’s long robe draped behind him. Jagged emotions forced their way through Sebastian’s body. Fury at this macabre

2 Fire and Faith

circus being staged for the education of those assembled. But his anger was being overwhelmed by something even more primal. A fear so palpable he felt it growing and spreading, twisting around each of his neighbors.

The last accusatory speech finished. Everyone held fast, waiting for a dead man to appear. The air about them thickened, as their breathing became heavier and each movement an effort. And then Sebastian heard it—the sound that heralded all he had been dreading: a low rumbling noise approaching from beyond the stone wall. Within a minute, the sound had grown louder and closer, a dysrhythmic *clack, clack, clacking*, a wagon's solid wheels struggling over cobblestones. Then a flicker of movement within a shadowy archway. Two workmen emerged into the sunlight dragging a load, their faces wrapped with handkerchiefs. Blinking against the bright sun, they surveyed the multitude of five hundred souls or more, many of Basel's most illustrious citizens.

One man was before the cart, pulling. The other behind it, pushing. The clumsy wooden wheels lurched over cobblestones and threatened to shake apart their pitiful burden. It seemed to take the men an age to pass through the stone gateway and into the paved courtyard on the outskirts of the city. On either side of the arch, thick rock walls extended north and south. Above rose a clock tower and turret that scowled over the unwilling city.

Between the stage and the bewildered mass of people, a heap of kindling had been assembled around a wooden post. The cart lurched forward again, until the workmen paused, as if considering how best to transfer their load and secure it to the post. They bent over the low narrow cart, muscles tense. A shudder ran through the crowd as the workmen reached into the wagon's tray and lifted out a decaying corpse, holding it by the remnants of its tattered clothes and shroud. With grunts of exertion, they tried to swing it out and onto the top of the wood pile. Though the torso moved in line with their intention, the cadaver's legs at one end and its head at the other caught on the side of the narrow cart. For a moment, it

looked as though all three might fall to the ground. But with great effort and no little cursing, the two live men regained control of the dead.

It was an agonizing dance, with four attempts before, finally, they transferred the uncooperative corpse. The rotted body now lay splayed across the kindling pyre, emaciated arms, legs and head arrayed in an absurdly unnatural pose. Now came the task of tying it to the stake. It was clear the decaying mass before them was only held together by what was left of its garments. Attaching the cadaver to the post was only possible by coiling lengths of rope across its arms, its neck, its head. It was a terrible task, the body collapsing back onto the wood several times before they could secure it. Even then, they were forced to compromise, fixing the upper part of the body to the post while the lower part sank down into a bizarre semi-sitting position.

For many in the crowd, it was too much. They lowered their eyes, focusing on the ground in front of them. For others, like Sebastian, as much as they tried to look away, they could not, their wide eyes drawn to the grisly display before them. And what they saw made their blood run cold. Where the dead man's clothes had rotted, pale bone and patches of black, putrefied flesh appeared. Where there once had been a face, the lips and nose had gone, leaving a maniacal grin beneath two desiccated eyes and a patchwork of decaying skin, tufts of hair and beard, and glimpses of yellowing skull.

The dark-robed man in the center chair turned his head. With the index finger of his right hand, he signaled to a kerchiefed workman off to the side of the stage. This man, his face obscured, held a torch, the end of which had been soaked in pitch. He plunged it into a brazier of burning coals, extracted the flaming torch, then walked across to the pile of kindling and corpse. He hesitated, looking up to the cloaked figure for confirmation. That figure—a commandingly tall, severe man—gave a terse nod of his head. The torchbearer plunged the flame into the tinder, holding it there until an orange tongue began to lick its way up through the heap of dry wood. His

4 Fire and Faith

work done, the man retreated, and the flames in the pyre began to climb, igniting the legs and feet of the dead man.

Sebastian looked down, eyes firmly upon the paving stones before him. His final act of defiance would be to refuse to witness that which they were forcing him to observe.

A loud *crack*, like a musket being fired, ended his resolve. His eyes jerked up and toward the flames. A shower of sparks billowed out of the pyre from an exploding pocket of, he supposed, sap-filled wood. In that millisecond, the image of a blazing body twitching under the onslaught of brutal heat awakened something buried deep in Sebastian's past.

He shuddered, recalling the same sight—no, far worse—more than twenty years ago. An event that had changed the course of his life.

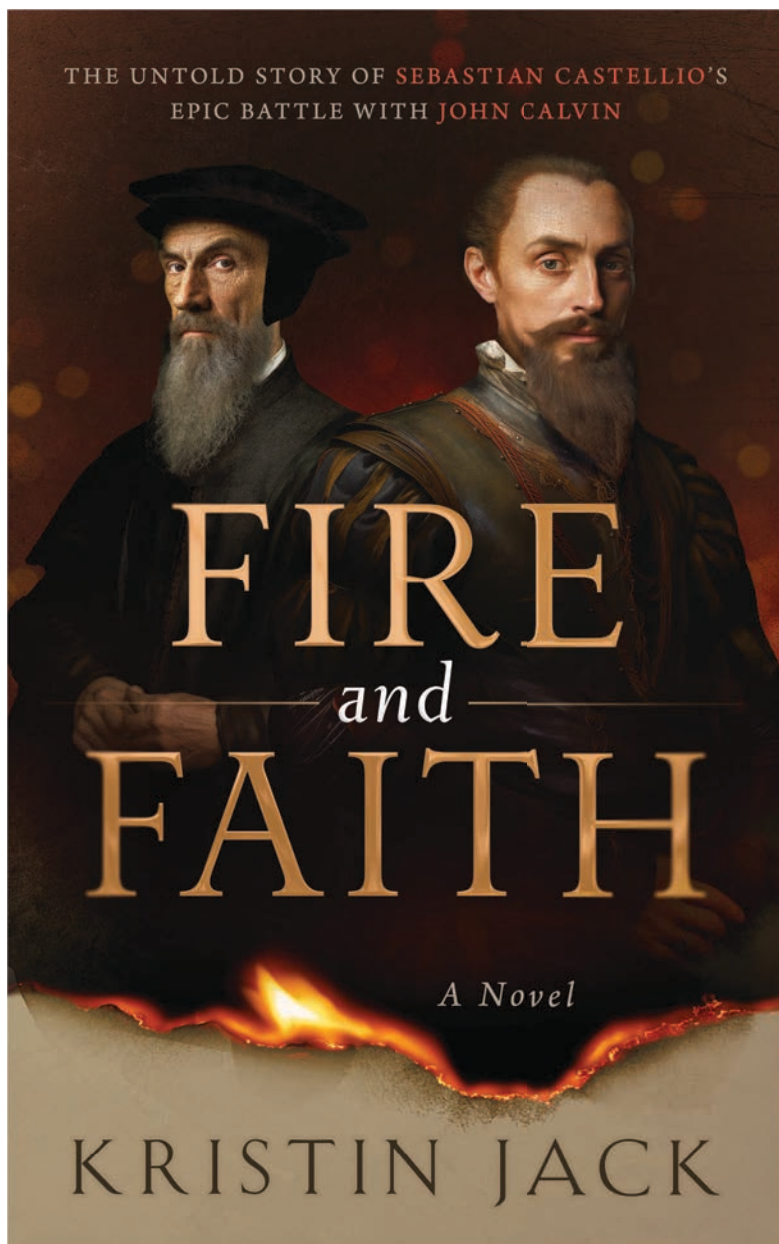
WANT TO KEEP READING?
CLICK A BUTTON TO PURCHASE



amazon



other stores



THE UNTOLD STORY OF SEBASTIAN CASTELLIO'S
EPIC BATTLE WITH JOHN CALVIN

FIRE
and
FAITH

A Novel

KRISTIN JACK