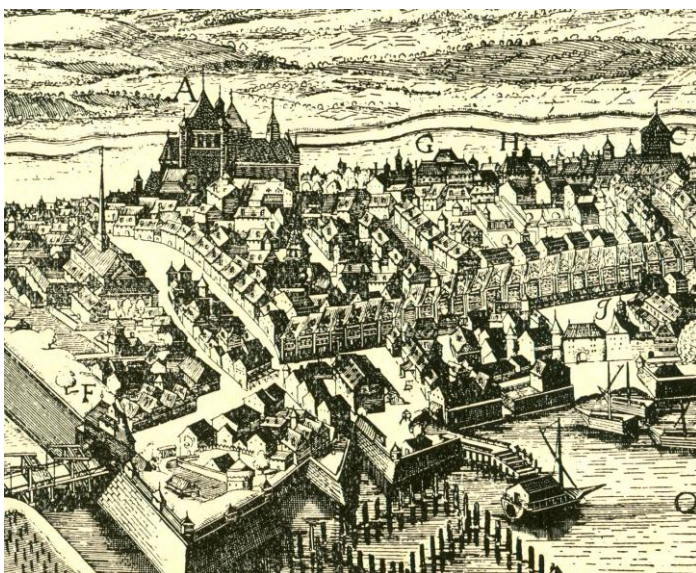


Revisiting Geneva: Robert Kingdon and the Coming of the French Wars of Religion



Edited by
S. K. Barker



*St Andrews Studies in French
History and Culture*



ST ANDREWS STUDIES IN FRENCH HISTORY AND CULTURE

The history and historical culture of the French-speaking world is a major field of interest among English-speaking scholars. The purpose of this series is to publish a range of shorter monographs and studies, between 25,000 and 50,000 words long, which illuminate the history of this community of peoples between the end of the Middle Ages and the late twentieth century. The series covers the full span of historical themes relating to France: from political history, through military/naval, diplomatic, religious, social, financial, cultural and intellectual history, art and architectural history, to literary culture. Titles in the series are rigorously peer-reviewed through the editorial board and external assessors, and are published as both e-books and paperbacks.

Editorial Board

Dr Guy Rowlands, *University of St Andrews* (Editor-in-Chief)
Professor Andrew Pettegree, *University of St Andrews*
Professor Andrew Williams, *University of St Andrews*
Dr David Culpin, *University of St Andrews*
Dr David Evans, *University of St Andrews*
Dr Justine Firnhaber-Baker, *University of St Andrews*
Dr Linda Goddard, *University of St Andrews*
Dr Bernhard Struck, *University of St Andrews*
Dr Stephen Tyre, *University of St Andrews*
Dr Malcolm Walsby, *University of St Andrews*
Dr David Parrott, *University of Oxford*
Dr Alexander Marr, *University of Cambridge*
Dr Sandy Wilkinson, *University College Dublin*
Professor Rafe Blaufarb, *Florida State University*
Professor Darrin McMahon, *Florida State University*
Dr Simon Kitson, *School of Advanced Study, University of London*
Professor Eric Nelson, *Missouri State University*
Dr Peter Hicks, *Fondation Napoléon, Paris/University of Bath*

**Revisiting Geneva:
Robert Kingdon and the
Coming of the French
Wars of Religion**

Edited by
S. K. BARKER

St Andrews Studies in
French History and Culture



PUBLISHED BY THE
CENTRE FOR FRENCH HISTORY AND CULTURE
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

School of History, University of St Andrews,
St Andrews, United Kingdom

This series is a collaboration between the following institutions:

Centre for French History and Culture,
University of St Andrews

<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~cfhc/>

Institute on Napoleon and the French Revolution,
Florida State University

<http://www.fsu.edu/napoleon/>

Fondation Napoléon, Paris

<http://www.napoleon.org/fr/home.asp>

Digital Research Repository,
University of St Andrews Library

<http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

© The authors 2012

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of the Centre for French History and Culture.

First published 2012

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University of St Andrews

ISBN 978-1-907548-06-2 paperback

ISBN 978-1-907548-07-9 e-book

Front cover: A view of seventeenth-century Geneva (courtesy of the University of
St Andrews Library).

Contents

	<i>Abbreviations in footnotes</i>	page	iii
	<i>Acknowledgements</i>		iv
	<i>List of contributors</i>		v
	Foreword		1
	<i>S. K. Barker</i>		
1	Robert M. Kingdon (1927-2010): a scholarly life well lived		5
	<i>Andrew Pettegree</i>		
2	Recruiting and training pastors: the Genevan model and alternative approaches		10
	<i>Karin Maag</i>		
3	Geneva in the centre? The challenge of local church orders		23
	<i>Philip Conner</i>		
4	The elites and the politicisation of the French Reformation: the work of Robert M. Kingdon and the origins of the Huguenot party		37
	<i>Hugues Daussy</i>		
5	Genevan print and the coming of the Wars of Religion		52
	<i>Andrew Pettegree</i>		
6	Settling quarrels and nurturing repentance: the Consistory in Calvin's Geneva		71
	<i>Jeffrey R. Watt</i>		
7	Developments in the history of Geneva since the 1960s		85
	<i>William G. Naphy</i>		

Abbreviations in footnotes

<i>BSHPF</i>	<i>Bulletin du Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français</i>
<i>CO</i>	<i>Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia</i> , ed. by G. Baum, E. Cunitz and E. Reuss (59 vols., Brunswick, 1863-1900)
n.p.	no place of publication
<i>SCJ</i>	<i>The Sixteenth-Century Journal</i>
<i>STC</i>	<i>English Short Title Catalogue:</i> http://estc.bl.uk

Acknowledgements

This collection has been an exciting and challenging project to be involved with over the last few years, and it could only be achieved with the generous help of several people. Andrew Pettegree was the original instigator behind the collection, and continued to give advice throughout the editing process, including taking on the sad responsibility of memorialising Professor Kingdon at the start of 2011. Malcolm Walsby read various drafts and helped with translation. Guy Rowlands provided greatly appreciated patient support and guidance on behalf of the series *St Andrews Studies in French History and Culture*. I would also like to thank the anonymous external reviewer for their helpful comments and suggestions. Finally, the contributors to the original colloquium in St Andrews in celebration of *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563* must be thanked, not least Robert Kingdon himself.

Sara Barker
November 2011

The essay by Andrew Pettegree, ‘Genevan print and the coming of the Wars of Religion’ was previously published in Andrew Pettegree, *The French Book and the European Book World* (Leiden, 2007).

List of contributors

S.K. Barker is a teaching fellow in the Department of History at the University of Exeter. Her doctoral research at the University of St Andrews formed the basis of her monograph *Protestantism, Poetry and Protest: The Vernacular Writings of Antoine de Chandieu (c.1534-1591)* (Ashgate, 2009). She has held postdoctoral research fellowships at the University of St Andrews and the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance at the University of Warwick, and is currently researching the practices of news translation in early modern Europe.

Philip Conner's doctoral research led to his monograph *Huguenot Heartland: Montauban and southern French Calvinism during the Wars of Religion* (Ashgate, 2002). As a member of the St Andrews Reformation Studies Institute and Ushaw College, Durham, he also co-edited the collection *The Sixteenth Century French Religious Book* (Ashgate, 2001). He is now a priest based in Cumbria.

Hugues Daussy is perhaps best known for his work on the French nobleman Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, most notably his monograph *Les Huguenots et le Roi: Le combat politique de Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (1572-1600)* (Droz, 2002). An expert on the Protestant nobility of early modern France at the Université du Maine, he is now researching the relationship between Protestantism and the nobility from the origins of the Huguenot party in the 1550s to the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre: *Le Parti Huguenot. Histoire d'une désillusion (1557-1572)* (Droz, 2012).

Karin Maag has been Director of the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan since 1997. She has published extensively on the training of ministers, including *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education* (Ashgate, 1995), as well as conducting research into early modern education and relations between civil and ecclesiastical authorities in early modern cities. She is currently working on a volume of primary source texts on worship in Reformation Geneva.

William G. Naphy is Professor in History at the University of Aberdeen. He is a leading authority on Calvin's Geneva during the sixteenth century as well as the history of crime and punishment in the early modern period, and has authored six books, including *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (Manchester University Press, 1994). He has also published on the history of witchcraft, plague, and sexuality, and is currently working on a two-volume study of sexuality, deviance and criminality in early modern Geneva.

Andrew Pettegree is Professor of Modern History at the University of St Andrews. Having initially researched aspects of the European Reformation, including religious refugee communities in the sixteenth century, and the Reformation in Germany, France and England, his recent work has focused on the history of communication, and especially the history of the book. This has seen the publication of *The Book in the Renaissance* (Yale University Press, 2010, winner of the Phyllis Goodhart Gordan Prize), and the launch of the Universal Short Title Catalogue Project, a collective database of all books published in Europe between the invention of printing and the end of the sixteenth century, now continuing on into the seventeenth century.

Jeffrey R. Watt is Professor of History at the University of Mississippi. An expert on the Genevan Consistory, he is the author of *The Scourge of Demons: Possession, Lust, and Witchcraft in a Seventeenth-Century Italian Convent* (University of Rochester Press, 2009), *Choosing Death: Suicide and Calvinism in Early Modern Geneva* (Truman State University Press, 2001), *The Making of Modern Marriage: Matrimonial Control and the Rise of Sentiment in Neuchâtel, 1550-1800* (Cornell University Press, 1992), as well as numerous articles and book chapters. He is the immediate past president of the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference.

Foreword

S. K. Barker

For over fifty years, the work of Robert M. Kingdon shaped the field of Reformation history, in his native America and in Europe. Recognised as the preeminent American scholar of the Reformation in Geneva and France, his initial work on Geneva soon led to further investigation of the practical and intellectual impact of the Reformation on thought and life in the early modern period. This small volume is a tribute to his work and influence by some of the scholars he inspired over the course of the last half-century. The collection of essays has been through several incarnations. Conceived as a celebration of Professor Kingdon's influence in the field of French history and culture, it took as its initial starting point a small colloquium held at the Reformation Studies Institute at the University of St Andrews in November 2006, where a number of friends and colleagues gathered to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563*. Those present were inspired by Professor Kingdon's warm-hearted and insightful recollections concerning the research behind the doctoral thesis which would become the celebrated book, in which he joyfully recounted the exhilaration of being one of the earliest Anglophone scholars to engage with the Genevan archives. His advice to the younger scholars in the audience about how to use the critical reception of one's doctoral research when one is preparing a monograph will not quickly be forgotten.

Following the colloquium, the decision was made to invite other friends and colleagues to contribute papers which would highlight the scope and depth of Professor Kingdon's influence in the wider fields of Reformation Studies and French history and culture. As news reached us of Professor Kingdon's poor health over 2007-2010 and sadly of his death in December 2010, work continued on this volume. It is in this form that we present it now, a small but heartfelt memorial to a generous and much-missed scholar. This is shown in the collection's opening remarks by Andrew Pettegree, whose valedictory essay on the life and influence of Robert Kingdon notes both his scholarly rigour and his personal kindness.

First and foremost this volume is a tribute to a great historian and teacher. This indeed was the original intention behind the St Andrews colloquium. It also shows the influence *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France* continues to exert. Each of the essays here acknowledges the importance of Kingdon's original work to the individual scholars involved, and to the field of Francophone Reformation history to this day. The book's initial scope can be seen in the breadth of areas subsequent scholars have been led to investigate as a result of an encounter with Geneva as guided by Kingdon.

The first four essays focus on the interplay between Geneva and the French Protestant communities. What emerges is a complicated relationship, caught up in contrasting political, religious and social aims, so that Geneva can no longer simply be seen as a French Protestant H.Q., dictating the course of events in France. Karin Maag investigates how Geneva's own rigorous standards could not always be met in the religiously volatile situations of France and the Netherlands. She finds that a common solution was the appropriation of lay people to positions of influence within the congregation. The problem of unofficial ministers was one that greatly vexed the ministers of the French National Synods, but with less control over the duties of deacons and elders than in Geneva, it was not too much of a stretch to encourage lay people to broaden their remit, as Maag sees in both France and the Netherlands. Philip Conner's essay similarly examines the relationship between Geneva and the local churches in France. Revising the traditional Geneva-centric historiography of the *Histoire ecclésiastique* he underscores the vibrancy of the individual local churches which emerged within France over the 1550s and 1560s. Conner shows not only how events on the ground frequently moved too fast for authorities in Geneva to maintain a tight control of the network, but that their attention was rather unevenly split between different churches, and indeed between north and south, with the result that self-sufficient congregations like that of Montauban could be left somewhat to their own devices. Calvin and his Genevan colleagues choose to focus on particular sectors of the French Protestant movement, prioritising the groups that they felt would be able to provide the most enduring support for their aims. This idea is similarly picked up on by Hugues Daussy. He takes up Kingdon's observations on the French political elite's relationship with Protestantism. Where Kingdon was able to pinpoint a deliberate policy on the part of Calvin to use carefully placed ministers to speak to influential French nobles and guide their religious choices, Daussy takes this further, arguing for an earlier politicisation of the

Huguenot party than has previously been allowed. As Maag and Conner show how practical religion could deviate from Genevan norms, so Daussy shows that up to 1560 Calvin enjoyed relatively strong control over the political impetuses of the French Protestant movement, but that this was largely shattered by the Conspiracy of Amboise. In the essay by Andrew Pettegree, the close links between Geneva and French Protestants are given a very practical demonstration, in an analysis of the Genevan book market and its supply of books to France. Pettegree updates Kingdon's picture of Genevan print by examining two important aspects: the extent to which print did indeed support evangelisation, and the changing role of Geneva within the world of French Protestant print. As Protestantism expanded exponentially in France at the start of the 1560s, it became more and more challenging to supply French Protestants with books from Geneva, and local printing outfits temporarily took over Geneva's mantle, such as those in Lyon, Caen and Orléans.

The final two essays return the focus to the city of Geneva, and show how, as Bill Naphy points out, one of Robert Kingdon's most enduring legacies is an appreciation of the city itself as more than just the convenient backdrop for the great reformer. Jeffrey Watt's contribution recognises the scholarly debt owed to Kingdon, specifically in his stewardship of the publication of the Consistory records. Watt paints a picture of a Consistory whose primary concern was the reconciliation of parties in dispute, ultimately achieving a far greater control of people's moral understandings than the contemporary Roman Inquisition. Cases of spousal abuse, sexually-charged insult and extreme violence might warrant tougher measures, but even the most seemingly innocuous disputes might require mediation, and this appears to have been something Genevans understood and acted upon. Naphy too underscores the debt modern scholars owe to Kingdon's scholarship, from the various editorial projects which have blossomed from the Genevan archives, to his own continuing contributions to the study of the city's socio-cultural history. His essay demonstrates both the vitality of the city in the sixteenth century, and the continuing fascination it holds for modern scholars, presenting a short series of case studies which illustrate the practicalities of making Geneva, and its inhabitants, fully reformed. This is a story where Calvin is not at the centre, even if he is still ever-present. Contrasting his own work on family disputes played out in the Consistory with that of Karin Maag on the Genevan Academy, Karen Spierling on infant baptism and Jeffrey Watt on suicide, Naphy brings out how Geneva

was not merely an ideological monolith, but a city of people living real and frequently messy lives.

Given Robert Kingdon's own primary research interests, it should not surprise readers of this volume that the focus of the essays tends to be very much on the 'Religion' of both France and Geneva, as much as if not indeed more than the 'Wars'. As successive generations of scholars contribute to the historiographical understanding of the Francophone Reformation, the ebb and flow of religious sensibilities continues apace. We may have moved on from the necessity of explicitly 'putting religion back'¹ into studies of the period, but as Luc Racaut has recently argued, this only works if local, regional and national political sensibilities are also taken into full account alongside religious motivations.² This volume focuses on the complicated relationships between Geneva and the French Churches and between Calvin and Protestants in Geneva and across the rest of Francophone Europe, vital relationships that have been somewhat overshadowed by Geneva's dominance in the official narrative of products like the *Histoire ecclésiastique*. Explaining the various forces driving French Protestantism is crucial to explaining the unfolding of the wars, and there cannot be a satisfactory historical understanding of French Protestantism without understanding Geneva. This is where Robert M. Kingdon started from, and it is only proper to return there now.

¹ Mack P. Holt, 'Putting Religion back into the Wars of Religion', *French Historical Studies*, 18 (1993), 524-51.

² Luc Racaut, 'Reason of State, Religious Passions and the French Wars of Religion', *Historical Journal*, 52 (2009), 1075-83.

1 **Robert M. Kingdon (1927-2010): a scholarly life well lived**

Andrew Pettegree

Robert Kingdon was part of that great generation of American Reformation historians that set the intellectual tone for much of the most influential work on the early modern period for the second half of the sixteenth century. Alongside Natalie Zemon Davis, Miriam Usher Chrisman and Gerald Strauss, Kingdon led the descent into the archives that reconfigured Reformation history in the post-war era, and gave the subject a new social historical focus. It says a great deal for the impact of this work that we now take this for granted. But in the intellectual world in which Kingdon grew up, the history of religion was largely the domain of Church historians, and normally practiced by adepts of the church in question. Robert Kingdon's work, focussed on the social and political consequences of evangelical teaching, was therefore not uncontroversial. It seems unthinkable to us that the doctoral dissertation that became *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion*, one of the most influential single books on the Reformation published in the twentieth century, should have been greeted with anything other than acclamation. But it received a rough ride from its examiners, and was only grudgingly accepted.

Perhaps it was ahead of its time, with its tale of small cadres of ideologically motivated men infiltrating their homeland, and planting the seeds of a Reformation that almost brought the kingdom of France to its knees. But in other respects it was very much a book of its time, a product of the cold war era in which Kingdon grew to adulthood. Looking back now over half a century, with the Cold War also now consigned to history, the comparison between the revolutionary cells inspired by Calvin and the perceived menace of creeping Soviet influence in western democracies seems more obvious. It was partly my recollection of hearing Bob talk about the Korean War (1950-1953), and its impact on his personal and influential development, that planted the idea of proposing a day symposium devoted to a fifty year retrospective on Kingdon's first book.

There can be few history books that are still required reading fifty years after their publication. This is certainly one.

The great achievements of Kingdon's milestone study were essentially threefold. One was to revolutionize the study of Calvin and Calvinism. Kingdon was one of the first to recognise that one could shed light on Calvin's life and thought by looking beyond the reformer's own works, to other church and secular archives. This has been an inspiration to a whole generation of historians who have transformed the study of Calvinism with the help of systematic trawling of the Genevan city archives, and the records of other places where Calvinist churches became entrenched. This is work that Kingdon continued throughout his lifetime, most notably through his leadership of a project to bring the records of the Genevan Consistory into the public domain in a modern, accessible scholarly edition. Before this project was begun we knew of the Consistory's work only through a nineteenth-century transcript of a small fraction of the cases, and through Calvin's own reflections on his work in his correspondence (inevitably self-serving and partial, though not always recognised as such). The handwriting of the original Consistory records was sufficiently daunting for scholars to prefer the greater convenience of the nineteenth-century selection, which naturally favoured the most lurid or notorious cases.

The picture this painted of the work of the critical institutional heart of the Calvinist system was therefore grossly misleading. We knew a great deal about Calvin's pursuit of critics and adversaries, men like Michael Servetus and Jérôme Bolsec. We knew of the brutal treatment of some who most notoriously transgressed the social mores of the day (in truth, no different in Geneva from any other sixteenth-century city). But we knew little from these excerpts of the patient, painstaking work of reconciliation and teaching undertaken by the Consistory, as the ministers and elders sought to reconcile the quarrelling, heal broken relationships, correct the troubled and instruct the theologically confused. When we see the whole Consistory minutes we know that this mundane, repetitive and often frustrating work occupied by far the major part of the Consistory's time.

The second great achievement of *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion* was to draw attention to the decisive role played by religious exiles in shaping events in their homeland. In this Kingdon followed in the footsteps of Christina Garrett's great study of the *Marian Exiles*, but Kingdon's was the first study of equivalent weight for a Continental culture. Kingdon's revelatory description of the activities of

the French exiles who clustered around Calvin, and for whom Geneva was only a temporary refuge, has seeded a whole generation of studies on other exile places, in England and Germany. Other scholars have also followed Kingdon in a determination to bring the core records of the churches into the public domain, with outstanding editions of consistorial material for churches in Germany, the Low Countries and England. In consequence we now know hugely more about how Calvinism functioned as a social and political system, a knowledge mostly lost in the mid-twentieth century, when the turn away from organised religion allowed for the presentation of a pantomime caricature of Calvin's moral tyranny. It is largely thanks to Kingdon and the scholars who have followed in his footsteps that we now know different.

Thirdly, Robert Kingdon was a pioneer of the new social history: a history that in Reformation scholarship found its most profound echo in the local study. The urge to investigate the social and personal consequences of the enormous turbulence unleashed by Luther's movement led for the first time to the systematic employment of archival sources to describe the emerging new evangelical communities. It was a scholarly development that acknowledged that the new theological teaching, sometimes only dimly understood, was only one of a number of influences that determined complex questions of religious allegiance. Kingdon was a pioneer in this archival work, but in no way constrained by the new orthodoxies of total history, heavily influenced by the French *Annales* school. His second book, *Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement*, was as much a work of intellectual history, focussed on the struggle between the defenders of Genevan orthodoxy and the alternative vision of church government promoted by Jean Morély. Morély was an old foe, and the dispute had a very personal aspect. This conflict, symbolic of the struggle to establish Genevan orthodoxy at the heart of a national Reformed church in France, has also inspired much important work. Two of those writing in this volume have undertaken ground-breaking research on the period after the outbreak of the French religious wars, when the momentum of growth was fatally interrupted and the French Huguenot churches faced testing times.

The history of ideas was also at the heart of the insightful and influential *Myths about the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre*, a project on which Kingdon worked intermittently for twenty years. This is a book about the copious literature that followed the astonishing and cataclysmic event that defined and scarred French Protestantism, the slaughter of the leaders of the movement in Paris in 1572. In a prescient and highly

effective survey, Kingdon examines both the best known examples of French resistance theory, the so-called monarchomach tracts, and a host of far less familiar works. These other books (to judge by their publication history) may indeed have been far more influential at the time than the more studied *Francogallia* and *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*. Kingdon's work can now be read and enjoyed as a contribution to the emerging discipline of book history, then far less developed than is the case today. At least one of the contributions in this volume takes up the threads of Kingdon's work in this area.

Robert Kingdon was the most gentle of the big barons. At first meeting he could be shy, and in a crowd he would often hang back and observe. But he was a wry observer of his more flamboyant contemporaries, and a generous and sympathetic friend of the young. His graduate students, who were numerous, recognised him as a director and mentor of unusual patience, insight and kindness. Between the time that he began his academic career and his retirement Robert Kingdon directed to completion an astonishing 37 doctoral dissertations. His students were never required to follow an intellectual or topographical agenda constrained by his own immediate research interests. Doctoral students under Bob's direction wrote on France, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and England. These dissertations studied aspects of the Lutheran, Catholic, Radical, Anglican, Calvinist and Zwinglian Reformations, and from a wide variety of perspectives, including those of intellectual, social, cultural and church history. This was a painstaking, rigorous and humane training, and it is little surprise that these former students are themselves now well anchored in the historical profession, bringing to their work the same generosity of spirit and devotion to teaching that characterised Bob. Bob Kingdon was also a very good friend of St Andrews. He visited several times, and did everything he could to support and encourage the work of the St Andrews Reformation Studies Institute, from its very first days. He generously donated to the Institute several substantial runs of periodicals and other volumes from his library; other rare and valuable items have gone to the Meeter Center at Calvin College, another institution to which he gave great support and encouragement.

It is a great pleasure with this volume to be able to celebrate both this long association with St Andrews, valued on both sides, and the milestone work with which Robert Kingdon began his contribution to historical scholarship. It is a contribution which finds a second enduring monument in the Geneva Consistory project, pressed forward since his

retirement by a team of Bob's former students and friends. Few historians alive today will have the satisfaction of having contributed so much, and having left such a substantial legacy.

Robert Kingdon passed away on 3 December 2010, sustained through his last illness by his family, professional colleagues, students and numerous friends. This short volume is both a tribute to a great book and a happy remembrance of a one-day conference in St Andrews where Bob played a typically lively and generous part in this retrospective assessment of his work. He is much missed.

2 Recruiting and training pastors: the Genevan model and alternative approaches

Karin Maag

In 1956, Robert Kingdon's seminal work, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563*, provided one of the earliest models in English of an in-depth study on the training and preparation of Reformed clergy in the sixteenth century. His investigation of the recruitment, training, examination and placement of the first major cohort of pastors who served the French churches during the explosive growth-phase of the Huguenot church was noteworthy for the careful attention he paid to this crucial building-block of French Protestantism. His methodology was followed by later scholars, including in particular Bernard Vogler in his 1976 monograph on the Rhineland clergy, *Le clergé protestant rhénan au siècle de la réforme*, and Willem Frijhoff's shorter study on the selection and training of the Dutch Reformed clergy, 'Inspiration, instruction, compétence? Questions autour de la sélection des pasteurs réformés aux Pays-Bas, XVIe-XVIIe siècles' in the 1994 issue of *Paedagogica Historica*. My own work was also partly inspired by *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France*, especially as I sought to uncover the role played by the Genevan Academy after 1559 in ensuring adequate training and preparation for future pastors.¹

This contribution will focus more specifically on the ways in which Reformed congregations in France and the Netherlands did or did not in fact conform to the Genevan practice of training, examination and oversight when it came to recruiting religious leaders for their

¹ Bernard Vogler, *Le clergé protestant rhénan au siècle de la réforme* (Paris, 1976); Willem Frijhoff, 'Inspiration, instruction, competence? Questions autour de la sélection des pasteurs réformés aux Pays-Bas, XVIe-XVIIe siècles', *Paedagogica Historica* 30 (1994), 13-38; Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1620* (Aldershot, 1995).

communities. The procedures for examining pastors are detailed in the Genevan ecclesiastical ordinances of 1541, revised in 1561. The 1541 ordinances described a careful process in which the candidate was to be examined on his doctrine, on his preaching, and on his morals. Members of the Genevan Company of Pastors constituted the examining board. After successfully passing these examinations, but before being installed in a parish, the candidate was also vetted by representatives of the Genevan magistracy.² Together, experienced pastors and magistrates made sure that incoming pastors were competent, orthodox, and lived reputable lives that could serve as models for their congregations. Before beginning their active ministry, pastors had to confirm that they acknowledged and would uphold Reformed doctrine and had to swear that they would faithfully serve the church and city authorities of Geneva.³ A good example of this careful vetting practice in action comes from the registers of the Company of Pastors in June 1557. Faced with the need to fill one vacancy in the rural parishes and two in the city, the Company of Pastors examined three potential candidates in sequence over the course of a month. Each candidate was asked to present an exegesis of a biblical passage selected by the Company of Pastors, then was examined on his doctrine, and finally had to preach a test sermon in the presence of the Company of Pastors and delegates from the Genevan magistrates. The standards were high, as evidenced by the fact that one of the candidates, Matthieu Grandjean, was assessed as weak in his oral presentations, slow in his responses on doctrinal questions, and was clearly not performing at the level the Company of Pastors wanted, at least for its city pulpits. He did, however, show sufficient ability to allow the Genevan authorities to place him as a pastor in the rural parish of Ressin.⁴ Overall, therefore, the thorough Genevan vetting of candidates for ministry ensured that those serving the churches would be known quantities, whose teaching and lifestyle had been assessed and found acceptable by the Genevan ecclesiastical and civic leadership.

Given the large numbers of churches that sprang up in France and the French-speaking provinces of the Netherlands in particular during the

² Henri Heyer *1555-1909: L'Eglise de Genève: esquisse historique de son organisation* (Geneva, 1909), pp. 262-63.

³ Heyer, *L'Eglise de Genève*, pp. 262, 275-76.

⁴ Robert Kingdon, Jean-François Bergier, and Alain Dufour, eds., *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève au temps de Calvin* (Geneva, 1962), II, pp. 75-76.

late 1550s and early 1560s, it is clear that Geneva, even with the best will in the world, could not have hoped to provide enough approved pastors for all these congregations. Indeed, particularly in this period the appeals for pastors were so frequent and so desperate that the Genevan church even ended up sending some of its own pastors for lack of available and waiting candidates. At the same time, congregations in large cities in particular strategically requested certain Genevan ministers by name, on the grounds that the potential impact of their congregation was so significant that only an experienced pastor would do. For instance, Pierre d'Airebaudouze, who had been a pastor in Geneva since 1555, was requested in sequence – beginning in 1561 – by the churches of Lyon, Montpellier and Nimes. In between each posting he returned to Geneva, only to be sent out again for a period of a few months to a year.⁵ But Geneva had few pastors of its own to spare, and the ones who were sent out were on loan, and could not stay in their French congregations over the long term.

So how did the churches manage? What did they do if they could not obtain a pastor from Geneva? What alternatives did they pursue? Based on research on primary and secondary sources for France and the Netherlands, my contention is that we would do well to look more closely at lay-people, especially elders and deacons, and at the men listed in the French national synod records as ‘vagabond ministers,’ as viable alternatives, at least in the eyes of some congregations.

In his work, Kingdon focused on the eighty-eight men whose names were listed in the Company of Pastors’ registers as pastors sent to France between 1555 and 1563. He noted that these names were only the tip of the iceberg, since many more are known to have been sent from Geneva without having their names recorded in the Genevan registers. Based on the succinct records of the Company of Pastors for these years, the Genevans did all they could to locate, speedily train, examine and dispatch pastors to France. For instance, at the end of April in 1557, the minutes of the Company of Pastors record, ‘After having examined and heard Master Anthoine Bachelart of Aix en Provence preach, and after having carefully enquired about his life, we sent him to the faithful of Lyon to proclaim God’s Word to them.’⁶ Bachelart had only been in Geneva for four months at that point, so any training he could have

⁵ *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs*, II, pp. 94, 101.

⁶ *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs*, II, p. 73.

received would have been minimal.⁷ Yet even in those circumstances, given the explosive growth in the number of Reformed congregations during this period, the supply of pastors from Geneva could not hope to fill the need. Basing himself on the older, but thorough studies of Samuel Mours, Mark Greengrass estimated that in the 1560s there were between 1,200 and 1,250 Huguenot churches in France, excluding the territory of Navarre.⁸ Clearly, even if Geneva had supplied three or four times the number of those listed in the registers, about two-thirds of the churches would still have had to function without an ordained pastor sent from Geneva.

The key question then becomes, what did the congregations who needed a pastor do about the problem? In many instances, as noted by Kingdon, the churches were very proactive in writing to Geneva to appeal for one of the available pastors, or to put their name on a supposed catalogue of churches in need of a pastor, or to recommend a sponsored student to the Genevan Company of Pastors.⁹ This last approach, though slower to bear fruit in that the student had to spend some months or years in Geneva to be trained, did generally ensure that the church would be provided with an educated pastor whom they trusted, and who could be expected to repay their sponsorship with his loyal service to them in ministry.¹⁰

However for some congregations, the combination of the long and uncertain wait for a prospective pastor from Geneva, together with the expense and hazards of travel when it came to sending a student or receiving a pastor from that far away, meant that churches were willing to consider other options. Indeed, a close study of the letters received by the Genevan Company of Pastors in the period provides a glimpse into this parallel process that congregations made use of to obtain the leaders they

⁷ Robert Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563* (Geneva, 1956), p. 27.

⁸ Mark Greengrass, *The French Reformation* (Oxford, 1987), p. 45.

⁹ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 18 and 32-34. For more on the complex question of whether or not the Genevan Company of Pastors maintained a list or lists of French churches needing a pastor, see Peter Wilcox, 'L'Envoi de pasteurs aux églises de France: trois listes établies par Colladon (1561-1562)', *BSHPF* 139 (1993), 347-74.

¹⁰ For more on students sponsored by individual churches for future service as pastors, see my chapter on France and the Genevan Academy in Maag, *Seminary or University?*, pp. 103-28.

needed. One strategy was for the congregations to choose someone local whom they saw as gifted with the talents needed for ministry, whether or not that man had received any formal theological training or been vetted, either by the Genevan Company of Pastors or by the French provincial or national synods. This practice was particularly popular among noblemen, who felt entitled to select pastors for a church based in their household without regard for any more official approval process of the candidate in question. For example, on 22 December 1561, pastor Antoine Popillon reported to Calvin from Châlons that a certain Francoys Guiltard had come to see him bearing a letter from René Bouceron, the seigneur de Grandry. Bouceron was offering Guiltard a position as pastor in the church Bouceron wanted to establish centred on his own household. Because Guiltard had not been vetted or officially appointed or sent to any congregation on the authority of Geneva or the wider French church, Popillon urged him to refuse the offer ‘because he well knows that this is no way to achieve the good result that is hoped for (the establishment of a church in Bouceron’s household) and that he well knows that to do so would be to insert himself into the ministry.’¹¹ While in this case, the advice of Popillon seems to have prevailed, it is clear that this situation would not have been unique, given the significant numbers of noble families who adopted the Reformed confession during these years.¹² Indeed, the third National Synod, meeting in Orléans in April 1562, took up as one of its first orders of business the issue of churches established by noblemen and centred on their households. The delegates to the Synod agreed that ‘We will ask the princes and other lords who serve the [royal] Court who have or wish to have a church established in their households to select ministers from duly Reformed churches, and to be sufficiently assured of [these pastors’] legitimate calling.’¹³

In some instances, the result of the diverging approaches to obtaining a pastor was a clash between the *ad hoc* and the more regulated system of preparing and providing pastors. For example, on 1 November 1561, the pastor sent from Geneva to Mont-de-Marsan, Nicolas Le More, reported his frustration to the Genevan clergy in that his ministry was neither appreciated nor respected by his flock, at least in large part because they preferred another man instead. He stated, ‘They have an

¹¹ CO, XIX, col. 192.

¹² Greengrass, *The French Reformation*, pp. 49-54.

¹³ Jean Aymon, *Tous les Synodes Nationaux des Eglises Réformées de France* (The Hague, 1710), I, p. 23.

interest in having a certain doctor d'Aire to be their pastor, even though he is not yet a minister. Since then, they no longer pay heed to me.'¹⁴ Writing a few days earlier, on 28 October 1561, the church of Roquefort (the leading church of that area of Guyenne in south-western France) reported on the conflicts in the Mont-de-Marsan congregation. After noting that Le More wanted to leave, the Roquefort consistory indicated that when they had approached their colleagues at Mont-de-Marsan about the possibility of a jointly-funded trip to Geneva to get more pastors, the Mont-de-Marsan representatives had declined. 'They answered that they had no intention to send anyone [to Geneva] nor to contribute to [the costs of travel] because they claim to be already furnished with a certain doctor Dayre.'¹⁵ Here we see how one congregation dealt with its need to find a pastor that suited them, even at the cost of rejecting the minister sent from Geneva, and at the risk of upsetting the Genevan authorities with their ingratitude. In the end, however, the Mont-de-Marsan congregation did conform to the more regulated system at least to the extent of sending Jean Dayre to enrol in the Genevan Academy in 1562.¹⁶

A similar situation, highlighting some of the same tensions, emerged in Nîmes, where rivalry broke out between Guillaume Mauget (the pastor sent from Geneva to lead the Nîmes congregation) and Jean Mutonis, a former monk who had converted to Protestantism and who had been a leading figure in the Nîmes reformation prior to Mauget's arrival in 1559. By 1561, Mutonis was in trouble with Mauget and the Nîmes consistory for preaching and celebrating the sacraments without official authorization on their part. Questions were raised as to whether Mutonis was in fact a properly-ordained pastor. Factions developed on both sides among Protestants in Nîmes, and the situation was only resolved when Mutonis was transferred (by the authority of the Genevan Company of Pastors) to the church of Uzès.¹⁷ In this case, Mauget was supported both by the consistory of Nîmes and by the Genevan church, and hence was

¹⁴ Nicolas Le More to the Church of Geneva, 1 November 1561, in *BSHPPF* 46 (1897), 466-68.

¹⁵ The church of Roquefort in Guyenne to Calvin, 28 October 1561, *CO*, XIX, col. 83.

¹⁶ Sven and Suzanne Stelling-Michaud, *Le livre du recteur de l'académie de Genève* (6 vols., Geneva, 1959-1980), III, p. 24.

¹⁷ On this case, see Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 47-48, and more recently Joshua Millet, 'A City Converted: The Protestant Reformation at Nîmes, 1532-67' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2000), pp. 91, 157-58.

able to maintain his position in spite of the support his rival received from the population of Nîmes. At the same time, though Mutonis' path into ministry was murky, he was sufficiently qualified to serve as the officially-appointed pastor of another church. Given the pressing need for pastors in this time period, the Genevan authorities' flexibility in Mutonis' case is perhaps not surprising.

In another case, reported by Kingdon in his work, the pastor sent from Geneva, Lucas Hobé, also known as Seelac, wrote from the church of Sainte Foy in Guyenne to pastor Nicolas Colladon in Geneva. Writing on 25 June 1559, Hobé indicated his grave anxiety over the actions of unauthorized clergy in his area, mentioning by name a Parisian man called La Saussaye and a defrocked monk called Jérôme du Verdier. In Hobé's opinion, the solution was to have the Genevan authorities send a letter to the churches, telling them 'not to accept any man living to preach except for those who can present good testimonials from those who sent them. And we should be strictly prohibited from easily ordaining anyone unless they are well-known to us and to the churches over a long period.'¹⁸ The very fact that Hobé offered these ideas suggests that the reverse was in fact happening, and congregations were selecting men as their leaders without vetting them or checking to see whether they had been approved by the Genevan Company of Pastors or the broader French church.

Indeed, these individual cases were part of a wider pattern that was prevalent during these early expansion years of the Huguenot church. The records of the French National Synod bear witness to what Synod delegates saw as the problems of pastors who inserted themselves into the ministry. Among others, the third French National Synod, held in Orléans in 1562, condemned Pierre Boulay for having pushed his way into the ministry in Niort, while the delegates to the fourth National Synod in Lyon in 1563 made the same complaints about Jacques Pines.¹⁹ In fact the fourth Synod began the practice of publishing a list of vagabond and deposed ministers in its minutes, so that all the churches could be alerted to avoid accepting any of the men as their pastor.²⁰ Again, the fact that the National Synod delegates felt it necessary to publish these lists indicated that there was a risk that the men in question would be received as *bona fide* pastors by congregations needing clergy. Some of the men whose

¹⁸ From Lucas Hobé, also known as Seelac, to Nicolas Colladon, on 25 June 1559, CO, XX, cols. 466-67.

¹⁹ Aymon, *Tous les Synodes*, I, pp. 30 and 37.

²⁰ Aymon, *Tous les Synodes*, I, pp. 36-37.

names appeared on the lists prepared by the National Synod were deposed from ministry because of moral failings. However, the main complaint about the others was not their behaviour in the pastorate, but rather their inappropriate route into ministry. They had not followed the official path, and had not been formally vetted by the church, whether in France or in Geneva. In a sense, therefore, these lists reinforce the evidence from the letters cited earlier, namely that there was a parallel, albeit unofficial route to ministry in the early years of the Reformed church in France.

The French churches' thirst for spiritual leadership could thus be quenched at least in part through the use of vagabond pastors, in spite of the strictures of the National Synod against the employment of these men. However, another way for congregations to obtain the leadership they were looking for was for them to entrust greater responsibilities to their lay leaders, namely to their elders and deacons. The Calvinist system of lay leadership was designed to create offices in the church beyond that of the ordained pastor. In Geneva, Calvin and his colleagues fixed the parameters of elders' and deacons' responsibilities fairly strictly, but the situation in other areas that saw a rapid growth of Calvinism was more challenging. While Geneva had sufficient ordained pastors for its own community to ensure that the elders' and deacons' responsibilities would not undergo much change, churches that lacked ordained pastors in France could be tempted to expand the remit of the elders and deacons to cover more of the pastoral tasks. Even the 'Discipline' of the French Reformed Church shows evidence of this interest in using elders and deacons to play a greater role in church life. For instance, the 25th and 26th articles of the 1559 'Discipline' state,

25: As for the deacons, their responsibility will be to collect and distribute the collections for the poor, the prisoners, and the sick, following the decision of the Consistory. They are to visit the poor, the prisoners and the sick, and to catechize in private homes, and if a deacon is found who is suitable, and who promises to dedicate himself and devote himself perpetually to God's service and to ministry, then he can be selected by the Consistory to teach the catechism in public, following the formulary adopted by the Church. This will be done in order to try them out, without them being allowed to

administer the Sacraments. 26: The office of the Deacons is not to teach the catechism in public.²¹

On the face of it, articles 25 and 26 seem rather contradictory, yet a deeper analysis of the situation suggests that the National Synod was trying to allow for the possibility of making greater use of deacons in ministry without making the practice normative for all deacons. Promising deacons who could potentially later study and be examined and ordained as full pastors might catechize in public, but deacons in general were not to claim this task for themselves.

In spite of this last warning, the French churches clearly used the deacons in a more extensive way, since the third National Synod, meeting in Orléans in 1562, saw the issue of deacons teaching the catechism in public as a problem, and recommended that churches avoid doing so, 'given the negative outcomes that have occurred.'²² As Glenn Sunshine notes in his study of French Protestantism between 1557 and 1572, both provincial and national synods fought against the local churches' practice of using deacons as a form of lay-preacher. As Sunshine and others point out, the fact that the term 'deacon' had been used previously in the Catholic church as one of the stages on the route to priesthood meant that local congregations might not have been alert to the greater distinctions which Calvin and the leaders of French Protestantism saw between the functions of deacon and ordained pastor.²³ Yet local congregations' use of deacons to provide the instruction that was sought after by local believers is a testament to the ingenuity and lateral thinking of these Calvinists who were still struggling with the shortage of sufficiently qualified and approved ordained pastors.

The problem of finding enough pastors for the congregations who needed them was not confined to France. In the Netherlands, just as in France, the number of Calvinist faithful and sympathizers grew exponentially in the 1560s, far more rapidly than any training system for pastors could hope to keep up with. The synod and classis records of the Walloon (French-speaking) churches of the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands provide evidence in their minutes that highlights the

²¹ Aymon, *Tous les Synodes*, I, p. 5.

²² Aymon, *Tous les Synodes*, I, p. 27.

²³ Glenn Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism: the Development of Huguenot Ecclesiastical Institutions, 1557-1572* (Kirksville, Mo., 2003), pp. 108-17. See also Janine Garrisson, *Les protestants au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1988), p. 210.

resourcefulness of persecuted churches that had to find alternatives or substitutes to formally-examined and ordained clergy. One option was to employ formerly Catholic clergy as spiritual leaders for the congregations, yet this strategy did have its risks. The delegates to the regional synod at Antwerp on 1 May 1564 noted, 'Persons newly admitted into the church, especially monks and priests, cannot be chosen to the ministry without lengthy and diligent examination and approbation, both in regard to their conduct and to their doctrine.'²⁴ Thus simply 'recycling' a Catholic priest or monk into a Calvinist pastor could not be done swiftly or without due examination, presumably carried out by synodal or classical authorities. At the regional synod of Lille, meeting on 26 April 1563, the Walloon synod delegates noted, 'No one should be admitted to administer God's Word without a legitimate calling, and those who boldly insert themselves [into ordained ministry] should be suppressed.'²⁵ Thus the French National Synod records of vagabond pastors had their parallel in the Dutch context, where these men whose calling had not been ratified by any church authority were known as the 'vrije lopers' or rovers. Just as in France, the synodal records highlight the challenges of the move from a more open process in which congregations could be led by a range of men whose service was perhaps more important than their formal training and examination, to one in which national and regional church leaders wanted to assert control over the selection process for pastors. In the Netherlands, evidence suggests that a compromise was reached over time, where both approaches could coexist. Indeed, the enduring legacy of this more open process that privileged vocation and practical ability over academic qualifications and formal preparation can be seen in the room left in the synodal ordinances for the 'Duytsche Clercken,' right up into the seventeenth century and beyond.²⁶

²⁴ *The Church Orders of the Sixteenth Century Reformed Churches of the Netherlands together with Their Social, Political, and Ecclesiastical Context* Translated and Collated by Richard R. De Ridder (Grand Rapids, 1987), p. 32.

²⁵ Leiden University Library 'Actes des Synodes 1563-1655', Bibliothèque Wallonne A II 2, p. 4.

²⁶ For more on the evolution of training processes for Dutch pastors in the early modern era, see Fred van Lieburg, 'Preachers between Inspiration and Instruction: Dutch Reformed Ministers without Academic Education (Sixteenth-Eighteenth centuries)' in Theo Clemens and Wim Janse, eds., *The Pastor Bonus: Papers read at the British-Dutch Colloquium at Utrecht, 18-21 September 2002*(Leiden, 2004), pp. 166-90.

Another option for congregations, if vetted and ordained pastors were hard to come by, was to adopt a broader understanding of the responsibility of lay leaders. Hence, the propensity to stretch the parameters of various offices in the church also surfaced in the Netherlands in the same period. In the Walloon case, the churches' strategy seems to have involved a greater use of elders and deacons to do some of the work of ministry otherwise associated with regularly ordained pastors, who were more easily discovered and removed by Catholic authorities.²⁷ The minutes do not clearly state 'Our churches have used elders in the place of ordained pastors,' but if one notes what practices were condemned by the Walloon synods in regards to the respective roles of elders and pastors, one can gain a sense of what some congregations had been doing. In other words, there is a strong likelihood that if the synods took time to explicitly condemn certain practices, they did so because someone somewhere was or had been engaged in such practices.

On 26 April 1563, for instance, the synod of the Walloon church meeting in Lille stated that congregations without ministers could have elders or deacons lead in prayer and read from the Bible, and they could give brief answers to any points raised, but they were not to usurp the ministers' role and were not allowed to preach.²⁸ At the synod held at Tournai in the same month and year, the delegates stated that elders and deacons could not perform marriages, not to mention baptisms, 'unless one cannot convene pastors to do this.'²⁹ At the regional synod held in Armentières (place codename 'Le Bouton') on the same date, the delegates agreed that elders could offer prayer and read from the Scriptures in congregations without pastors, but could only do so 'without adding any explanation or answering any questions.'³⁰ In all of these cases, the regional synods were trying to define the role of lay leaders in congregations that did not have pastors. The disagreements over whether or not elders and deacons could answer lay-people's questions during services or not show that there was a wide range of practices in this regard in the Walloon churches. The move from explaining a passage of Scripture in response to a question to actual preaching is a minimal one. The fact that synod delegates had to repeatedly warn elders not to begin preaching

²⁷ Guido Marnef, *Antwerp in the Age of Reformation: Underground Protestantism in a Commercial Metropolis 1550-1577* (Baltimore, 1996), p. 66.

²⁸ 'Actes des Synodes', p. 3.

²⁹ 'Actes des Synodes', p. 6.

³⁰ 'Actes des Synodes', p. 9.

or to usurp the ordained pastor's role certainly suggests that in some cases, the distinction between elder and pastor had been eroded, and that congregations were filling the void in ordained leadership by using elders instead. Yet this practice was understood as exceptional, and churches that were not 'under the Cross,' i.e. were not being persecuted, were to conform to standard practice, reserving preaching, the celebration of marriages and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper to ordained pastors alone.

Similarly, we find evidence in the Walloon synod records of a greater role for deacons, paralleling the practices in France. Thus the regional synod meeting at Antwerp on 1 May 1564 described the deacons' responsibilities as follows:

their charge is to receive and distribute the monies for the poor, the prisoners and the sick, visit them, go to their homes to catechize them, and in case they are found to be capable and fit for this task, if they promise to consecrate themselves wholly to the service of God and to the ministry, they can then be elected by the minister and the consistory to catechize in public according to the form adopted by the church and that so as to give ample proof [of their vocation] – without being able to administer the sacrament.³¹

As in France, the aim here was to allow for certain deacons to teach the catechism in public as one of the first steps in their vocation to become ordained pastors at a future date. We should note that both in France and in the Netherlands only those deacons selected by their consistory (and pastor in the Dutch case) could teach the catechism publically. In other words, this expansion in the duties of certain deacons was still done under the oversight of the appointed leadership.

In the early 1560s, both the churches in France and in the Netherlands were prone to adopt strategies that went beyond the Synod-advocated system of requesting and receiving ordained clergy through the official route. The shortage of such pastors, coupled with the need felt by congregations to obtain the leadership they were looking for as soon as possible led these communities to adopt alternative approaches, including

³¹ *The Church Orders of the Sixteenth Century Reformed Churches*, p. 32.

recruiting someone locally to be their pastor, allowing non-vetted men to serve as ministers, and extending the mandate of elders and deacons to carry out at least some of the functions normally assigned to the ministers. Robert Kingdon's work illustrated admirably how the official system was meant to work, and also highlighted the difficulties that could occur in implementing the Genevan model. His research has since stimulated other scholars to look more closely at the training of Reformed pastors. More work now needs to be done on the early alternatives to the Genevan system, both to establish more clearly how they worked and to set the history of these more *ad hoc* approaches into the broader context of the leadership of the early Reformed churches. Although these different models of ministry largely disappeared as the official training process became more streamlined, and as the number of available and formally-trained and examined pastors matched more closely the number of congregations, the history of these early adaptive strategies should not be ignored.

3 Geneva in the centre? The challenge of local church orders

Philip Conner

Historians have always been at a loss to explain the speed and scale of the Protestant ascendancy in France in the years before the outbreak of the Wars of Religion. The abrupt changes in the French political scene following the death of Henry II certainly contributed to a climate of political uncertainty. Whilst the political turmoil of the times opened opportunities to express religious dissent, historians are nevertheless hard pressed to explain how Protestantism became a mass movement so swiftly, seizing the country on a scale and with a speed that was unprecedented. In a matter of months a movement that had been so disparate was able to press home bold claims. Of course, there were many political opportunists who sought to use the religious tensions to promote their own political ends, but politics alone cannot explain religious change and the speed and effectiveness of the Calvinist challenge. More than any other book of its time, Robert Kingdon's *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion*, succeeded in uncovering the religious dimension of this transformation and the ensuing struggle that it provoked.¹

There is no question that Geneva played a crucial role in directing the shape of this evangelical fervour, not least through its ministers and the resources at its disposal, print and propaganda. But what is less understood is the complex way in which this missionary activity was received and translated into local practice. This local contribution to Protestantism is an often untold aspect of the French Reformation. The reasons for this lie in the fact that explanations of the growth of Calvinism have rarely broken free from a historiography based largely upon Genevan sources. The *Histoire ecclésiastique* – published in Geneva in 1580 – is a classic example of the constructed reality that its Genevan authors sought

¹ Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563* (Geneva, 1956).

to project upon events in France.² It has since been relied upon by generations of historians as the standard account of the French Reformation. Written some years after the initial upsurge of Protestant activity, the Genevan ministers who supervised the compilation of this official history were able to create an inspiring and orderly narrative of events that at the time were far more chaotic. The account of the Huguenot wonder years is highly stylised and gives little indication of just how turbulent the times were and how limited Geneva's command of the situation actually was. The limits of Geneva's control were manifested most clearly in the failure of Calvin to rein in the culture of public disobedience and violence that accompanied the Reformation and which culminated in the outbreak of civil war, events about which Calvin had the gravest misgivings. It is also shown in the different models of church organisation that vied with one another in those heady days. Jean Morély's widely-read and popular treatises, for example, were to prove more than a thorn in Geneva's side.³ In those early days Geneva's control of events cannot be assumed. Calvinism emerged through and often alongside ideas that often stood ill at ease with Genevan precepts.

In a bid to redress the over-emphasis upon Genevan sources, this essay will explore what local French sources can tell us about the unfolding of church orders within France. Whilst few local sources – consistorial and synodal records – have survived, enough evidence emerges to question the unrivalled status of Geneva. On a number of critical issues, local churches were not afraid to adapt received ways of doing things to suit their own ends. This, of course, opens up wider questions concerning the degree to which the French Reformed churches were prepared to defer to Geneva, a question that has profound repercussions for our understanding of International Calvinism.

Geneva claimed its first Calvinist churches in the Loire valley – churches such as at Angers and Poitiers which were formed in the mid-1550s. And yet it was precisely in this area that evidence emerges to suggest that not all were singing from the same hymn sheet. Genevan sources tell us that a church was established in Le Mans in August 1561. We are led to believe that this was a direct response to Calvin's call for churches to be ordered

² *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France* (Toulouse, 1882 edn.).

³ Philippe Denis and Jean Rott, *Jean Morély et l'utopie d'une démocratie dans l'église* (Geneva, 1993).

so as to build up the unity of the movement and propagate the faith.⁴ Lacking local sources, there would have been nothing to contradict this official statement of events and Le Mans would have been just one of the many hundred Calvinist churches that emerged at this time, seemingly out of nowhere. However, in this particular instance, the survival of a consistory registry for the church at Le Mans reveals another story. The consistory records speak of the existence of a fully-fledged church in Le Mans several months prior to the Genevan record, and reflecting characteristics strikingly at odds with what Geneva would have accepted as orthodox.⁵

The man at the centre of the first church at Le Mans was Henri de Salvart, ordained in Poitiers where he attended the proto-synod of 1557, later serving at Tours before arriving in Le Mans towards the end of 1560. The proto-synod in Poitiers was responsible for the drafting of the *Articles polytiques*, the first attempt to provide a formal framework to the emerging churches. Whilst there was much in this proto-synod that echoed Geneva's priorities there remained elements which would have furrowed brows in Geneva; some of these were adopted and elaborated in organising the church at Le Mans. They included the establishing of twin consistories, a looser interpretation of the duties of deacons, and a greater role for the wider congregation in church appointments.⁶

The establishing of a consistory was one of the defining characteristics of the Calvinist polity. But in the case of Le Mans, the workload of the consistory was divided between two chambers which met separately on a weekly basis – a *consistoire de la censure* to oversee the behaviour and beliefs of the Protestant community and a *consistoire de la police* to co-ordinate ecclesiastical governance. The latter of these consistories comprised nine members of the ruling elite besides the town's ministers, elders and deacons, appointments which were calculated to

⁴ Denis and Rott, *Jean Morély*, p. 409.

⁵ 'Registre du consistoire de l'église du Mans réformée selon l'Évangile 1560-61 (1561-62 nouveau style)' in M. Anjubault and H. Chardon, eds., *Recueil de pièces inédites pour servir à l'histoire de la Réforme et de la Ligue dans le Maine* (Le Mans, 1867). See Philip Conner, 'Huguenot Identities during the Wars of Religion: the Churches of Le Mans and Montauban Compared', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 54 (2003), 23-39.

⁶ 'Articles polytiques pour l'église réformées selon le S. Évangile, fait à Poitiers 1557' in E. Arnaud, ed., *Documents protestants inédits du XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1872), pp. 5-17.

extend the protective hand of the elite over the community and drive forward the political agenda of the Huguenot movement in the locality. The emergence of a bi-cameral consistorial structure was at odds with the Geneva model; indeed it was rejected in no uncertain terms by Calvin's closest advisors as a departure from the Scriptures.⁷ Nevertheless the development had been recommended by the proto-synod in Poitiers as a practical response to present difficulties, and many churches across France had no qualms in organising their churches in this way.⁸ The second chamber not only appeared to galvanise noble support but also provided a seal of political legitimacy to a growing movement.

Even with the arrival of a new minister who proved far more diligent in configuring the church at Le Mans to Genevan precepts, some adjustments continued to be made to suit local needs. In particular, efforts were made to continue to incorporate noble leadership into church structures. The second chamber was abolished but provision was now made for the nomination of four *surveillans des gentilhommes* who took it in turns to participate in consistorial business. Ostensibly, their role was the oversight of morals, particularly those of the political elite; few members of the elite would have countenanced disciplinary reproof from those of a lesser social standing than themselves. Furthermore, the noble *surveillans* proved useful in lending their weight to the collection of contributions for the church. The linking of noble leadership with the church was to prove a requisite to the local church's survival at a time of heightening tension and possible war.

But while political circumstances prompted deviation from what Geneva had in mind, local church orders continued to resist conforming to Genevan directives on other matters and this can be seen in the internal arrangements of the church. Following the recommendations of the proto-synod, for example, the church order in Le Mans envisaged a much more expansive role for deacons.⁹ Calvin sought to define the role of the deacon, returning to the Early Church's practice where deacons were appointed to help with the pastoral care of the poor and sick. The consistory records of Le Mans, however, reveal that deacons were fully involved in governance of the church, even assisting in collections,

⁷ Antoine de Chandieu, *La confirmation de la discipline ecclésiastique* (Geneva, 1566).

⁸ Ann H. Guggenheim, 'The Calvinist Notables of Nîmes during the Era of the Religious Wars', *SCJ* 3 (1972), 80-96.

⁹ 'Articles polytiques', pp. 7-11.

catechesis and the celebration of the liturgy. Furthermore, their presence on the consistory drew them into the moral oversight of the community, once again compromising Calvin's strict definition of their role. This reflected the practice of other church orders further afield. The French refugee churches in London, Frankfurt and Wesel, for example, were significantly influenced by Johannes à Lasco's church order. Printed in Latin in 1555, Lasco's order proved enormously popular across Europe and was translated into French the following year. Lasco's order certainly attributed to deacons a broader ambit of duties than those envisaged by Calvin.¹⁰

The role of the nobility in church governance and the nature of diaconal duties represent two marked deviations from the Genevan order which could in time be rectified. What proved more tenacious was a third deviation, congregationalism – regarded by its opponents as a virulent tendency, synonymous in France with Jean Morély. Morély did not invent congregationalism; in many ways it was inherent in Protestantism, but taken to its extreme, it made the ordering of Calvinism as a national and international movement deeply problematic. The emphasis upon the local church as an autonomous unit would surely have a deleterious effect upon efforts to co-ordinate action. Unfortunately historians are unable to grasp the full extent of the vigorous debate that congregationalism unleashed since synodal records reflect a very partial view of church organisation in France. But Geneva's voice was unequivocal, roundly condemning the way it diminished the Calvinist order.¹¹

It is instructive here to reflect upon the revision of Lasco's church order for the French refugee community issued in 1561 by the Genevan stalwart, Nicolas des Gallars. Des Gallars was a close confidant of Calvin and had been dispatched from Geneva to ensure that the French church in London conformed more exactly to Genevan precepts. The most

¹⁰ Johannes à Lasco, *Forma ac ratio ecclesiastici ministerii* (Frankfurt, 1555); and *Toute la forme & maniere du ministere ecclésiastique, en l'église des estrangers, dressée à Londres en Angleterre* (Emden, 1556). See Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 58, 67-68; Philippe Denis, *Les églises d'étrangers en pays rhénans (1538-1564)* (Paris, 1984); Michael S. Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church. John a Lasco and the Forma ac Ratio* (Aldershot, 2006).

¹¹ O. Fatio, O. Labarthe et al., eds., *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève* (Geneva, 1962), III, pp. 159-60. See also John Quick, ed., *Synodicon in Gallia Reformata*, (London, 1692), I, pp. 27, 56.

substantial change that des Gallars made to Lasco's order was the elimination of the element of congregational participation in the election of ministers and the consistory. Surely this has parallels in France. If one compares the first promulgation of the French church order in 1559 with its revision at the second National Synod in 1560, the role of the congregation in consistorial elections was clearly diminished. And yet a year after that – in 1561 – the church order in Le Mans persisted in making way for a strong congregationalist role in electing church officials.

The establishing of twin consistories, the expansive role of the deacon, and the scourge of congregationalism illustrate that there were other forces at work besides Geneva in the church-forming process. This would be entirely understandable had we been talking about the situation in the mid-1550s; Geneva at that point had not become the powerful agent of religious change that it is said to have become by the end of that decade. But the persistence of these aberrations into 1561 in an area that prided itself on its Calvinist credentials – according to later Genevan accounts – indicates that perhaps Geneva's power was not as encompassing as we may be led to believe.

But how about in the years after 1561? It is often assumed that the shock of war acted as a catalyst in ironing out local differences and bringing about unity around a common Huguenot cause. Geneva, it is suggested, took upon itself a leading role, acting through its ministers and the synodal structure that Genevan-trained ministers dominated. Certainly there existed strong links between the chief Protestant nobles and Geneva, and with the great centres in the north. If the Huguenot ascendancy was to succeed it had to capture the political heart of France – the crown, the court and the great cities. But the focus upon this arena in the north left other parts of France neglected. Certainly my research of Montauban in southern France revealed that this town – which ultimately would prove one of the most resilient Huguenot strongholds – remained in Geneva's blind-spot throughout much of the Wars of Religion. Even when it became clear that things in the north were not going the Huguenot way, Geneva continued to focus its efforts upon the great figures and cities of the north. This was to the neglect of those parts of France, particularly in the south, that proved far more tenacious in defending their gains. Far from being rooted out in the wake of the first war and later by the St Bartholomew's Day Massacres, many Huguenot communities in the French Midi consolidated their hold and pressed home their claims.

The south of France has always been regarded by those who live in the north as a rather different world, and for many who live in the south of France there is a great pride in that. Far from the political cauldron of Paris, events in southern France often followed a rather different trajectory, and the emergence of Calvinism provided many of the local town and country elites with the means to express this difference in a new way. If this was not their primary motivation for adherence to the new faith, it certainly provided a new axis to the on-going political struggles of the region. It is striking how neighbouring towns in the region that had a long history of rivalry quickly assumed their sectarian mantles. I am thinking, of course, of Toulouse which became a hotbed of Catholic fanaticism, particularly under the League, and Montauban which became a stubborn defender of the Huguenot cause, each vying with the other. And this pattern was certainly reflected in the surrounding towns and villages of the area, so much so that this part of France resembled a morass of competing sectarian and political rivalries. In this climate, Montauban took upon itself a crucial role as a mother church, providing protection and direction to the surrounding churches.¹²

Far from Geneva, and far from the unfolding events in the north of France – the great battles and sieges in and around Paris – how did the Protestant churches of the south emerge? At times left to their own devices, local churches were forced to respond quickly to the rapid unfolding of events and draw strength from their own internal resources. This meant that there was not always time to wait patiently for directives from either Geneva or from the national synods. But neither was there any reluctance to try things their own way, and here special consideration must be given to maverick ministers.

Deaf to Geneva's insistence upon greater uniformity in church order, some ministers in southern France preferred to follow their own instincts. One such figure was Pierre Viret, a charismatic and fearless preacher, with a strong independent bent. Described as a 'long-time intimate' of Calvin and since 1559 a Geneva colleague, Kingdon wrote of him as one who had 'never been inclined to follow the strict dictates of the Calvinist organisation consistently'.¹³ This is a polite way of saying that he was something of a loose cannon. Wherever Viret went through south-east France, he brought energy to the fledgling movement, inspiring it

¹² Philip Conner, *Huguenot Heartland. Montauban and southern French Calvinism during the Wars of Religion* (Aldershot, 2002).

¹³ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 82.

with a new-found confidence. In the wake of his preaching, followers dared to manifest their faith publicly and challenge the *status quo*, in many cases with provocative displays of bravado. No one in Geneva could fault Viret's zeal, but Calvin – amongst others – looked aghast upon the violent eruptions that followed his preaching. In Nîmes, Montpellier and Lyon, Viret's *tour de force* transformed the face of the evangelical movement.¹⁴

Though a devotee to Calvinism, Viret brought with him a background and experience that was distinctive. Viret had played an important part in shaping a polity in the Pays de Vaud in the Swiss lands. The lessons he learnt in these lands were brought to bear upon circumstances in France. Among the innovations that he introduced was the insertion of additional levels of church governance. Since the promulgation of the Discipline and Confession of Faith, provision had been made for each church to have its own consistory which in turn would send delegates to the provincial and national synods. This system provided a clear hierarchy through which concerted decisions and action could be taken. But in addition to this structure, Viret saw fit to introduce further levels of governance to enhance the co-ordination of local policy. Besides the consistories and synods, Viret introduced *colloques* and *classes*; *colloques* comprising delegates from a local collection of consistories, and *classes* to bring together representatives from *colloques* from across a region. A moderator was to be appointed over each *classe*. These moderators enabled Viret to keep a tighter personal control of local events, a role that he institutionalised in appointing himself chief minister or *superintendant* of the region's churches. Neither the *colloque* nor the *classe* system nor Viret's elevation was ever ratified by Geneva. The French National Synod in 1562 condemned the idea of superintendancy, never accepted the *classe* system, definitively suppressing it in 1571, and only officially endorsed *colloques* as a formal part of French Reformed ecclesiology a year later in 1572.

It was entirely natural that celebrities such as Pierre Viret took on a certain status in those parts of France that felt removed from Geneva's primary concern. The experiences of the churches in Lower Languedoc were far from being unique. Montauban, for example, endeavoured to keep Geneva abreast of local developments, forwarding manuscripts of its provincial synod meetings to the Company of Pastors. But Geneva, for its

¹⁴ Stuart Foster, 'Pierre Viret in France 1559-1565' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of St Andrews, 2000), pp. 112-18.

part, afforded little time on the town. In response to successive pleas for a minister, the Company sent Gaspard de la Faverge to Montauban in April 1561. But La Faverge's stay in the town was not a happy one; it lasted less than four months. A native of Savoie, La Faverge found it impossible to integrate himself into the community and met stiff resistance from those who wanted to militarise the movement. The militancy of Montauban's emergent church and the marginalisation of La Faverge, who had attempted to promote the more cautious approach favoured by Geneva, opened up a deep breach in relations between Montauban and Geneva. Writing to the church at Montauban, the Company was scathing towards the ingratitude that the town had shown to its minister. La Faverge was replaced by Martin Tachard, another Geneva-trained man, but with a strikingly different temperament, one who was not afraid to rally the troops with the outbreak of war. Tachard spurred the Huguenot forces on and provided his full support to militarist policy; Geneva's policy of restraint was cast aside in what everyone knew was a fight for survival. As Kingdon remarks, 'no 'turn the other cheek' policy here'.¹⁵ Even Geneva-trained ministers could not be guaranteed to toe the party line. The turn of local events and the strength of local traditions of municipal autonomy meant that events were rarely going to unfold as Geneva would have liked.

Whether the difficulties encountered by Geneva's ministers in Montauban soured relationships with Geneva, or whether Geneva simply sought to focus its energies elsewhere to areas of greater priority, Montauban was left out in the cold. Occasional appeals for ministers went unheeded. For many months Montauban relied upon visiting pastors to stop the gaps, and not all of these were suitable. One minister inveigled his way into Montauban and caused outrage in Geneva on account of the disrespect that he showed towards Calvin in his preaching.¹⁶ Another minister actively promoted Jean Morély's congregationalist views on church government.¹⁷ In the wake of this minister's visit, unauthorised laymen started to lead public prayers and take responsibility for the faithful, some even baptising children themselves. Such action must have provoked fears of a movement running away with itself, and may too have signalled a groundswell of congregationalism that church leaders were swift to disavow. The provincial synod asked laymen to desist from leading public prayers on their own 'private authority' and to await

¹⁵ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 111.

¹⁶ *CO*, XVIII, col. 3475; XIX, col. 3730.

¹⁷ *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs*, III, pp. 159-60.

‘deacons or appointed elders to lead prayers so that the people are preserved in the pure religion’.¹⁸

In the years following the first war, what is conspicuous for Montauban is the almost complete absence of Genevan ministers serving in the town. Compared with the levels of consultation that existed between Geneva and the Protestant towns in Lower Languedoc or the provision of Genevan-trained ministers to La Rochelle, Geneva came to play an increasingly distant and peripheral part in the everyday running of church events in Montauban. Rare are the records of Montauban conferring with Geneva on matters of church discipline.

The difficulties that Montauban faced in these early years of the Reformation forced the town to become increasingly self-reliant. Of the 57 ministers that served Montauban during the period of the Wars of Religion, four-fifths were natives of the town or its immediate vicinity. Of those that came from other regions of France, with notable exceptions, few resided in Montauban for any significant length of time. This would suggest that part of the strength of Montauban’s Reformation lay in the fact that it was able to muster strength from within its own community. Montauban’s Reformation does not demonstrate an overweening dependence upon Genevan largesse. From the beginnings of the Reformation ministers emerged from the ranks of the town’s population. Not only did this give them an instinctive understanding of local traditions and customs, but it also gave the church more immediate access to the town’s elite, for many of the town’s ministers issued from families of high political standing.¹⁹

Only in a very limited way was the Reformation in Montauban ever perceived as something imposed from beyond Montauban’s borders. Much of its eventual success derived from the fact that Montauban’s Reformation was a home-grown phenomenon, and remained so. It is unsurprising in these circumstances that Montauban did not feel as if it had to adhere rigidly to Geneva’s lodestar. Ministers in and around Montauban were quick to introduce Viret’s system of *colloque* and *classe* which became an abiding feature of local church governance. Whilst the political strategies of the town and its satellite dependencies were directed by town magistrates, the *colloque* meetings enabled Montauban to impress its authority upon its surrounding towns and villages, making

¹⁸ Conner, *Huguenot Heartland*, pp. 111-12.

¹⁹ Conner, *Huguenot Heartland*, pp. 40-46.

arrangements for ministerial provision, arbitration of disputes, implementation of moral codes, and the shaping of a godly society.²⁰

These developments in southern France seem to have gone largely unnoticed both at the time and by historians. Whilst the calamitous turn of events surrounding the St Bartholomew's Day Massacres caught the attention of international onlookers, the churches of southern France seem to have been left to provide for themselves. Calvin's successor, Théodore de Bèze, never really came to terms with the distinction between northern France, where many Huguenot communities were in terminal decline, and southern France, where Huguenots continued to comprise a majority in many towns.²¹ In the wake of the Massacres de Bèze wrote to the consuls of Montauban to encourage them. But his concern soon again turned northwards towards those churches whose survival was at stake. Such was his concern for the distressed communities of the north that he almost entirely neglected those churches that continued to thrive in the French Midi. It is very telling that the printed histories of the time barely mention the southern French towns; attention is given almost entirely to the horrible cruelties perpetrated in Paris and the heroic defiance of La Rochelle and Sancerre against the royal armies.²²

All of this had profound implications for Montauban and its church order. Out of the lime-light, Montauban was given a remarkably free hand in developing its church polity. The particular needs of this society and the demands that were being made upon the ministers led to a range of developments in the church order. The nature of these developments is exemplified by the local church's understanding of the diaconate. We have already seen how at Le Mans the town's first church order envisaged an expanded role for deacons, exceeding that delineated by both Geneva and later national synods. Viret too proved no captive to Calvinist convention; besides their work with the poor, Viret's deacons took upon a role more akin to assistant pastors, attending provincial synods, catechising the faithful, and overseeing the affairs and finances of

²⁰ Conner, *Huguenot Heartland*, pp. 102-06.

²¹ Bernard Vogler, 'Europe as seen through the Correspondence of Theodore Beza', in E. I. Kouri and Tom Scott, eds., *Politics and Society in Reformation Europe* (Hong Kong, 1987), p. 261.

²² For example, *Histoire des massacres et horribles cruaultez* (n.p., 1573); Francois Hotman, *Discours simple et veritable des rages exercées* (Basle, 1573). See Conner, *Huguenot Heartland*, pp. 210-15.

the church.²³ It would seem that this broader interpretation of diaconal duties continued to be embraced by the church in Montauban.

Part of the reason for the extension of diaconal responsibilities in Montauban was practical. Montauban had a large Protestant population; many of her smaller satellite towns and villages did not have the luxury of a resident minister. This shortage was bridged by expanding the responsibilities of deacons. As early as January 1562 the deacons were described at the provincial synod of Montauban as *diacres catechisants*, intimating a role that surpassed what Geneva had in mind. Such a role was not a short-term expedient. Ten years later Montauban's provincial synod instructed churches to 'elect deacon-catechists to catechise first and foremost those who want to join the church and those who want to celebrate the Lord's Supper'. The deacon-catechists were to 'employ exhortations in the form used in all public preaching and make particular use of a question-and-answer style to instruct the ignorant'.²⁴ In 1598, the consistory records reveal that it was a deacon who was dispatched to a rural church with the express mission of evangelising the land adjacent to the church. There is other evidence which shows that deacons were invested with the responsibility to supervise marriage preparation and to ensure that correct procedures were followed. In the absence of ministers deacons organised religious services, leading the prayers of the faithful and reading excerpts from the Scriptures and prayers from the catechism. One deacon went even further and began to administer the sacrament of baptism, an action that triggered disapproval from church authorities.²⁵

The demands upon the church authorities spurred other developments that proved to be enduring though they never received sanction from the Genevan Company of Pastors or the National Synod. But again, needs must. A common complaint in Montauban and its surrounding districts was the ignorance of the people who refused to assimilate godly ideals. Besides the ministers and deacons, the church order in Montauban began to appoint laymen who took up salaried posts as catechists. In fact the consistory records of the town indicate that one of these appointees was paid a little more so that he could assist in consoling the sick. This development finds an echo in Pierre Viret's church order for

²³ 'La forme et articles du synode tenu au Montelynard' (6 Mar. 1561); [Pierre Viret], 'La forme de dresser un consistoire', in *Documents protestants inédits...*

²⁴ A. Pujol, ed., *Recueil des réglemens faits par les synodes provinciaux du Haut Languedoc et Haut Guienne* (Castres, 1679), p. 95.

²⁵ Conner, *Huguenot Heartland*, pp. 109-111.

Béarn, where in 1565 Viret created a distinctive order of catechist alongside the existing church offices of pastor, elder and deacon. The catechist's task, Viret argued, was to 'propose the principal points of the religion in the simplest and clearest way possible, without being drawn on controversial questions'.²⁶

The existence of all these permutations within the Calvinist order does, however, raise questions for the historian. Studies of sixteenth-century Calvinist churches lay great emphasis upon the importance and coherence of discipline and organisation. But the overview presented here reveals the wide variety of practice that existed between and even within the new national churches. This may come as a surprise for France, traditionally seen as the first Reformed movement to be organised on a national level, and the one most commonly associated with Geneva. Despite the influence of Geneva, French congregations clearly cultivated a wide range of organisational practices on a range of issues, stubbornly maintaining a number of practices that the Genevan leadership most certainly deprecated. What emerges is a movement far less uniform than once supposed. Retrospectively Geneva may well have liked to have glossed over these more ambiguous developments within French Calvinism. What has to be remembered is that the Calvinist ascendancy was by no means assured. The French Confession of Faith and Discipline had to contend with pre-existing models of church order, many of which had a proven track record in other parts of Europe. Furthermore local churches continued to remain local and feel first for their own local interests. This was particularly the case in southern France where Geneva's reach was weaker. Forced to rely upon their own strength, the local Calvinist congregations of the French Midi exhibited a tremendous resourcefulness that was born out of their own experience and reflected an innate understanding of the local traditions and customs of the region. It was only natural that the way in which Calvinism expressed itself in these regions reflected this reality.

What emerges from this analysis of French Calvinism is a far more variegated picture, a picture that raises many issues. Were the differences that have been identified symptomatic of a certain unease within French Calvinism, a resistance to be ordered, a refusal to follow

²⁶ Conner, *Huguenot Heartland*, p. 110. See also Mark Greengrass, 'The Calvinist Experiment in Béarn' in Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke and Gillian Lewis, eds., *Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1620* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 136.

slavishly the dictates of Geneva? If so, what implications does this have for the way in which historians regard 'International Calvinism,' an expression that has so often been used to communicate the coherence of Calvin's movement? Was Geneva after all the centre of the show or does not the evidence suggest that the local churches succeeded in re-ordering the place of Geneva in ordering their own churches? Certainly the monolithic image of Calvinism is challenged; what emerges is a movement more versatile than previously recognised, ready to engage more effectively with the contours of the local political and religious world in which it existed.

4 The elites and the politicisation of the French Reformation: the work of Robert M. Kingdon and the origins of the Huguenot party

Hugues Daussy
(originally translated by
Malcolm Walsby)

Fifty years ago, Robert Kingdon laid the foundations for the analysis of the origins of the Huguenot movement and yet the political history of the French Reformation remains largely unwritten. In his *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France*, the American historian showed how the Reformed movement became increasingly politicised in the late 1550s and early 1560s.¹ Basing his research on hitherto overlooked archival sources in Geneva, he conclusively demonstrated that the conversion of a large part of the French aristocracy was the result of a deliberate policy orchestrated by Calvin. It was this policy that resulted in the creation of the Huguenot party. Kingdon saw a number of discreet stages in the development of the party. He underlined the efforts made by Calvin to convert the French aristocracy, leading him to conclude that from the beginning the reformer had sought to give the French Huguenot Church crucial social and political responsibilities. Kingdon then demonstrated the pivotal role of the nobles who had spent time in Geneva during the gradual inception of the party and its increasing politicisation. The noble pastors trained on the banks of Lake Geneva were the first to put in place a genuine ecclesiastical structure – a structure which initially also had political undertones. Simultaneously, the Reformed nobility launched military action in a more or less organised way. Encouraged by the leaders of the movement, these same combatants actively took part in the creation of an autonomous political system that ran in parallel to the ecclesiastical assemblies. It is important to understand the role of

¹ Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France* (Geneva, 1956).

Kingdon's work in reconstructing the process of politicisation of the French Reformation before analysing the impact of his research five decades later.

For a spiritual movement such as Calvinism, it was essential to target the higher echelons of society in order to ensure long-term survival. The conversion of the elite was vital to give the religious minority a large audience and a veneer of respectability. Calvin's determination to convert the aristocracy was first and foremost an awareness of what was required to help the propagation of his theories. Based on a now famous study of 88 missionary pastors mentioned in the registers of the *Compagnie des Pasteurs*, Kingdon showed that the Genevan reformer saw the conversion of the nobility as a central priority in his strategy of communication for the kingdom of France. To achieve his goal, he recruited a third of the pastors who were to propagate his message from the ranks of the nobility.² This high proportion might seem surprising, but in fact it is easily explained.³ Through these men, Calvin had a greater chance of convincing the social elite of the kingdom as they were less likely to listen to the preaching of pastors of lower social origins. Pastors of noble birth were not the only ones who attempted successively to undertake the conquest of the greatest lineages of the kingdom, but the Genevan reformer handed them the trickiest missions. Most notably, they were sent to princes favourable to the new ideas. Thus François de Morel, seigneur de Collonges, was sent in July 1561 to the court of the duchess of Ferrara in Montargis and became her chaplain.⁴ François Le Gay, sieur de Boissnormand, was named minister of the new faith at the court of Jeanne d'Albret in 1557. Calvin had told him to strengthen the queen of Navarre's commitment to the Reformation and he played a central role in the conversion of the nobility of Béarn.⁵

By retracing the steps of the Genevan envoys, Kingdon demonstrated the way in which the elite of the French nobility was systematically infiltrated. The pastors with the most erudition and best

² Out of 88 pastors, Kingdon was able to identify precisely the social origins of 42 individuals. A third of these were of noble birth. Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 6 and 138.

³ In the sixteenth century, between 1 and 2% of the population was noble, depending on the province, with a maximum of 3% for Brittany and Normandy. Arlette Jouanna, 'Noblesse, noblesses', in Lucien Bély, ed., *Dictionnaire de l'ancien régime* (Paris, 1996), p. 888.

⁴ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 35, 58.

⁵ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 61.

reputation were sent to infiltrate the aristocratic houses to convert the family to Calvinism. Amongst these hand-picked men, Kingdon underlined the pre-eminent role played in 1558 by Jean Macar, who served as an intermediary between Calvin and François de Coligny, seigneur d'Andelot, one of the first converts from the higher echelons of the French aristocracy. In his re-examination of the correspondence of the Genevan reformer and Coligny's brother, the American historian demonstrated the considerable importance Calvin attached to the continued commitment of this prominent nobleman. His adherence to Calvinism could be held up as an example to more hesitant noblemen and convince others to convert. Through his letters and numerous visits, Macar strengthened the faith of this key man for the spread of the Reformation message in France. Following Calvin's lead, Macar did not hesitate to threaten his interlocutor with eternal damnation if he disobeyed God by abandoning the true faith.⁶ Jean-Raymond Merlin was also part of this strategy orchestrated by Calvin and he was sent to Coligny's side in 1561. Merlin slowly spun his web in the admiral's entourage and kept in constant contact with Geneva whilst simultaneously giving advice on the approaches undertaken towards other noble houses who requested the presence of a chaplain.⁷

This patient, methodical and successful targeting of the noble elite sought to structure and strengthen the social network of the French Reformed community. The presence of eminent members of the aristocracy encouraged new converts and gave them the strength to persevere whatever the risks. Paris was a strategic battleground and one of the main targets of the Calvinists. The pastors Nicolas des Gallars, sent in August 1557, and François de Morel, in position in December 1558, encouraged the conversion of a large number of aristocratic families who became the backbone of the Paris Church during its infancy.⁸ But Kingdon showed that this drive to give Calvinism legitimacy and social respectability was not Calvin's sole motivation when he decided to conquer noble hearts and minds.

One of the great strengths of Kingdon's book is to prove that Calvin's tactic of targeting the French high aristocracy also sought to empower the French Reformed Church and provide it with high profile political leaders. Calvin hoped, probably a little naïvely, that the combined political weight of the converted noblemen would be sufficient to ensure

⁶ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 63.

⁷ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 81.

⁸ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 61-62.

that the Reformed faith could progress peacefully in France. It is in this context that the approaches made to the most powerful lineages of the kingdom such as the Châtillon, but also the Bourbon-Navarre by the intermediary of Antoine de Chandieu, must be understood.⁹ Whilst the conversion of Louis de Bourbon, prince de Condé – who had perhaps already all but converted during his visit to Geneva in 1555¹⁰ – was not difficult to ensure, convincing Antoine de Bourbon was an altogether tougher assignment. Even if in the end Antoine decided to remain a Catholic after having dithered for some considerable time, the success of other approaches was enough to commence the process of politicisation that Calvin so desired. When considering the origins of this mutation, Kingdon did not hesitate to write that ‘The beginnings of the Huguenot party had been laid by the attachment of the Châtillon-Navarre political leadership to Calvinist intellectual leadership during Macar’s pastorate’.¹¹ By 1558, at the end of Jean Macar’s mission, the basis of the future political organisation of the Reformed party was already in place.

The chronology suggested by Kingdon is of particular interest to those who wish to understand the circumstances of the birth of the Huguenot party, as it encourages us to look at the inception of the movement prior to 1562 – the year traditionally seen as marking the party’s formation during the first political assemblies of the Reformed movement. It highlights the existence of a period of gestation, during which the politicisation of procedures and the means used by French Protestants to guarantee their survival in the kingdom were gradually developed. Kingdon’s description of events between 1559 and 1563 at the end of his study underlines the fact that this mutation happened in a number of stages.

First of all, the role of the nobility in the initial batch of pastors clearly contributed to giving a political conscience to the French Reformed Church. The means used by François de Morel, who succeeded Jean Macar as pastor in Paris at the end of 1558, to strengthen the Calvinist position in the city are very telling and show the adoption of new practices. Morel, not content with filling the purely ecclesiastical requirements of his position, also undertook to make the most of his

⁹ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁰ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 59.

¹¹ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 64.

contacts at court.¹² His membership of the aristocracy was a decisive factor, as he was able to use networks and friendships that would not have been available to a man of lower extraction. Through his actions, the pastor probably contributed to the development of a genuine pressure group favourable to the Calvinist cause within the royal entourage. Calvin was fully aware that to be heard and listened to at court, the French Reformation had to use noble networks. At the Colloquy of Poissy in September and October 1561, it naturally fell to the most eminent representatives of the Calvinist clergy, chosen by the Genevan reformer, solemnly to defend the foundations of the Reformed faith in front of the king, the queen mother, the chancellor and the princes and prelates. Pastors of lower birth would not have been worthy interlocutors for the Cardinal of Lorraine and the Catholic bishops, but Théodore de Bèze, Nicolas Des Gallars and François de Morel were noble and possessed sufficient social credentials to engage in meaningful debate.¹³

Kingdon demonstrated that, gradually, the politicisation of the procedures adopted by French Protestants increased to ensure their defence. He rightly observed that noble pastors trained in Geneva were both the initiators and agents of this change.¹⁴ They played a vital role in organising the French Calvinist Church after 1559. Though the ecclesiastical assemblies thus created were not made to intervene in political issues, Kingdon underlined that the first provincial and national synods never adhered to this principle. Driven by the noble pastors, the second National Synod held in Poitiers in March 1561 discussed many political questions. Most notably, they compiled a 'mémoire' that was to be presented to the Estates General in Pontoise in which they dealt at length with the issue of the government of the kingdom during the king's minority. They also discussed a subject's duty of obedience to his prince. In particular they wondered whether it was possible to preach God's word without official authorisation. But most importantly, the synod decided to set up a permanent delegation to represent the interests of the Church at court. Kingdon demonstrated that this group of political representatives of the French Reformed Church swung into action, confirming the importance of the decisions taken by the synod.¹⁵

¹² Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 64.

¹³ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 82.

¹⁴ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 64.

¹⁵ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 85-86.

The politicisation of the pastors through the medium of the ecclesiastical assemblies was also visible on a provincial scale. Once again the nobility was central to this process. Kingdon underlines that, prior to 1562, a number of provincial synods undertook the organisation of the defence of the churches politically and militarily. The synod gathered at Clairac in Guyenne in November 1560, presided over by the ‘Genevan’ Boisnormand,¹⁶ the synod held at Montauban in April 1561,¹⁷ and the synod of Sainte-Foy for the Haute-Guyenne in November 1561 all did just that.¹⁸ The American historian asserts that the assembly of Montauban was the most interesting from a political perspective as questions about the role of the civil magistrate were debated. The problem of obeying the authorities was also raised.¹⁹ At Clairac and at Sainte-Foy, the synods mainly saw to the organisation of the military defence of the provinces by designating leaders who would be ready to raise troops as and when necessary.²⁰ Kingdon observed that the first ecclesiastical assemblies, which he does not hesitate to call political assemblies,²¹ were in part led by pastors formed in Geneva. Through their intermission, Calvin kept a degree of control over the initial conceptualisation and first political acts of the French Reformed churches.

The politicisation of the action of the churches was not simply obvious through the creation of structures and networks that enabled French Protestant voices to be heard at court. The grievances expressed through the pastors, be they noble, or by the medium of representatives sent to court were not echoed by sufficient voices to give them a chance of influencing the king. Indeed, royal policy towards the Reformed became increasingly hard-line during the reign of Francis II and the hopes nurtured by Calvin of a peaceful victory gradually disappeared. After the death of Henry II, the Guise actively sought to ensure that the king would remain deaf to the demands of his Protestant subjects. Part of the Protestant nobility then decided no longer to rely on spreading the word to obtain the king’s ear. Kingdon showed that the Conspiracy of Amboise, which marked the adoption of a far more violent form of action, demonstrated the failure of the line advocated and initiated by Calvin through his

¹⁶ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 109.

¹⁷ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 86-87.

¹⁸ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 109.

¹⁹ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 86-87.

²⁰ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 109.

²¹ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 109.

pastors. The reformer was very clear on the need to act only within the law and he refused to condone such an enterprise – it would have required the leadership of a prince of the blood such as Navarre or Condé to obtain Calvin’s blessing.²² For the first time, Calvin lost control of the process of politicisation of the French Reformed movement.

By taking up arms, part of the elite of the French Reformed nobility chose to ignore the political principles put forward by the reformer.²³ Even amongst the noble pastors close to Calvin, it would seem that some, such as Théodore de Bèze and François de Morel, backed the conspiracy.²⁴ Kingdon observed that a number of the conspirators were noblemen who had sought refuge in Geneva, where they had maintained a close relationship with the aristocrats who were still there when the events occurred. This is proved by the role played by those close to Ardoin de Maillane and Charles Ferré as well as indirectly by the patron of La Renaudie, the chief plotter of the conspiracy, Adrien de Briquemault, seigneur de Villemongis.²⁵ These men, who had all lived in Geneva in daily contact with Protestant pastors and with Calvin himself, had probably been encouraged by their proximity to the spiritual leaders of the Calvinist faith.²⁶ This could only have redoubled their fervour and willingness to fight for the cause. The American historian thus underlined the paradox of Calvinist Geneva. It offered a safe haven to large numbers of aristocrats who would thereafter play an important role at the head of the Huguenot movement (Adrien de Briquemault and Edme de Ferrière, sieur de Maligny are two obvious cases in point). They became active protagonists of the early Wars of Religion led by a French Protestant nobility acting in clear contravention of the legal and peaceful methods set out by the Genevan Reformer.

The Conspiracy of Amboise was not the only enterprise of this sort that the Reformed nobility had contemplated in 1560. This year clearly marked a turning point in the nobility’s stance as the emphasis moved from obtaining toleration through peaceful means to a more violent and aggressive policy. De Bèze himself helped devise a plan with Condé and Hotman that sought to take control of the southern provinces of the kingdom where the Protestants were well established. A unit was set up to

²² Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 69.

²³ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 69.

²⁴ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 72.

²⁵ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 74.

²⁶ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 60.

organise operations which included some of Condé's entourage in Lyon. Edme de Ferrière and Charles Ferré, who had also been implicated in the Amboise conspiracy, were part of this unit but the project was soon abandoned.²⁷ Kingdon's study clearly shows that both those whom Calvin entrusted with leading the peaceful political action and those who went on to become the leaders of the armed resistance were trained on the shores of Lake Geneva.

Whether peaceful or violent, the active political and military involvement of the Reformed nobility was part of the same phenomenon. It illustrated the upheaval of the first years of the political and military organisation of the Huguenots before they formed a real party. Condé's rebellion in April 1562 started a new phase in the process of politicisation of the Protestant struggle. Kingdon demonstrated that the ecclesiastical organisation that had been created in 1559 by the arrival of the ministers trained in Geneva was then used, even transformed, by the Huguenot nobility to mobilise the necessary troops for the military struggle.²⁸ This time Calvin decided that the movement was sufficiently legitimate and threw all his weight and authority behind the uprising.²⁹ Kingdon's study underlined that the Reformed organisation underwent significant changes. The third National Synod was held in Orléans in April 1562, by which time Condé had already taken up arms and published his manifesto. But paradoxically the synod dwelt far less on political matters than on previous occasions and turned instead to ecclesiastical questions, though this did not prevent those present from publicly giving their unequivocal support to the prince.³⁰ The role assigned to each protagonist became much clearer. Condé and the high Protestant nobility were to look after the political future of the French Reformation, replacing the noble pastors who had hitherto played such a vital role and who were now expected to concern themselves solely with religious matters. Henceforth, the synods, whether national or provincial, no longer served as quasi-political bodies and were replaced with specifically created institutions. These political assemblies gradually devised a system that enabled them to run in parallel with the ecclesiastical organisations. The unwitting gestation period of what was to become the Huguenot party that had been initiated by Calvin was now over. In its stead a more rational and controlled process began.

²⁷ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 75-76.

²⁸ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 110.

²⁹ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 69.

³⁰ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 87-88.

At the end of his study, Kingdon highlighted an important aspect of the history of the Huguenot party. He showed that the leaders of the Protestant movement had requested the help of foreign Protestant princes even before the nobility took over the political and military organisation. As early as 1561, Hotman approached the German princes whilst Maligny was entrusted with negotiations with England.³¹ Thus, by the time of Condé's revolt in 1562, the Reformed party had already established amicable relationships with foreign powers on which the prince could build.³² This had created a network of Protestant powers and, in Kingdon's eyes, this international dimension was one of the indispensable elements that made the new political organisation viable. He also showed the permanent logistical assistance of Geneva, even after the takeover of the Huguenot party by Condé and other members of the Reformed military high aristocracy. He underlined that though Calvin had stopped directing affairs in France, he continued to be consulted and listened to by Condé and Coligny.³³ Importantly, he also brought financial help and served as the main go-between for the party and its creditors in Basle, Strasbourg and Lyon in particular.³⁴ Geneva became, to use Kingdon's own expression, 'a veritable arsenal of Calvinism'.³⁵

This summary does not do justice to the wealth of information contained in Robert Kingdon's work on the political role of the Protestant elites. But it demonstrates what I consider to be the central tenet of his thought in this area – and which is a major contribution to the history of the formation of the Huguenot party.

In order to measure the impact of the results published by Kingdon in 1956, one must first understand the historiographical desert that preceded his *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France*. The only monographs that had any political analysis of the years that led up to the start of the Wars of Religion in France were the works of Lucien Romier over thirty years earlier.³⁶ These were good studies and

³¹ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 88-89.

³² Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 112.

³³ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 115.

³⁴ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 118-19.

³⁵ Kingdon, *Geneva*, p. 124.

³⁶ Kingdon cites four of Romier's works: *Les origines politiques des guerres de religion* (2 vols., Paris, 1913-1914); *La conjuration d'Amboise* (Paris, 1923); *Catholiques et huguenots à la cour de Charles IX* (Paris, 1924); *Le royaume de*

even today, despite their great age, are useful pieces of scholarship. But they were mainly based on Italian sources. Though he sometimes hinted at it, Romier never fully described nor understood the process of politicisation of the Huguenot leadership that had started in the 1550s. The birth of a specific Protestant conscience and independent political organisations continued to be misunderstood by historians, such as Michel Reulos, who never examined the ecclesiastical assemblies when analysing the institutions created by the French Reformed Party.³⁷ No one had ever proved the central role of Geneva in the inception of this mutation, even if the relationship between the mother church and the various communities in France had already been examined in a number of studies,³⁸ mainly interested in the specific role of Théodore de Bèze.³⁹

Kingdon's analysis and intuitions were groundbreaking. Fifty years later, they remain unchallenged and, indeed, have not been followed up by subsequent studies. The scene set out by the American historian could have been the starting point for a complete renewal of the political history of the French Reformed Church and could have led to a better understanding of the development of the Huguenot party. Along with another fundamental study published simultaneously, Helmut Koenigsberger's article on 'The Organization of Revolutionary Parties' during the sixteenth century,⁴⁰ this should have led to renewed research in

Catherine de Médicis. La France à la veille des guerres de religion (2 vols., Paris, 1925).

³⁷ Michel Reulos, 'L'organisation ecclésiastique des Églises réformées de France (1559-1561)', *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire moderne* 21 (1950).

³⁸ Mainly the work of Henri Naef, *La conjuration d'Amboise et Genève* (Geneva, 1922), but also the article by Hippolyte Aubert, Auguste Bernus and Nathanaël Weiss, 'L'organisation des Églises réformées de France et la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Genève, 1561', *BSHPPF* 46 (1897), 442-68. A large number of unpublished documents used by Kingdon had also been published in Athanase Coquerel, *Précis de l'histoire de l'Église réformée de Paris, première époque (1512-1594)* (Paris, 1862).

³⁹ Kingdon cites Henry Martyn Baird, *Theodore Beza, the Counsellor of the French Reformation (1519-1605)* (New York and London, 1899); Paul-Frédéric Geisendorf, *Théodore de Bèze* (Geneva, 1949); A. Picard, *Théodore de Bèze, ses idées sur le droit d'insurrection et son rôle pendant la première guerre de religion* (Cahors, 1906).

⁴⁰ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The Organization of Revolutionary Parties in France and the Netherlands during the Sixteenth Century', *The Journal of Modern History* 27

this area. However, this was not to be. Historians of the French Reformation were far more interested in the establishment and development of the ecclesiastical system created by the French church than in the formation of political organisations.⁴¹ Nicola Sutherland only refers to the political organisation in passing and simply reiterates Kingdon's findings,⁴² whilst Janine Garrisson does not delve deep enough into the formation of the Huguenot party to significantly advance our knowledge of the question.⁴³ Not a single study has been devoted to examining unpublished sources that could shed some light on this critical period in the development of the Protestant party. Articles by Philip Benedict and Denis Crouzet have referred to the formation of political conscience and activity in political pamphlets published as early as 1559, but they have not looked at how these ideas fitted into the wider perspective – in particular with regard to the structuring of a political organization with representative institutions.⁴⁴ The members of the noble elite who converted to Calvinism were fundamental to the development of the Huguenot party and yet amazingly they have been all but forgotten by historians. It can be quite a challenge to find sufficient information on the pastors, for their role was meant to be secret. François de Morel and most of his colleagues, such as Jean-Raymond Merlin or Jean Macar, remain in the shadows. Only the life and role of Nicolas des Gallars are now better understood thanks to the articles of Jeannine Olson.⁴⁵ But what is far more

(1955), p. 335-51. Kingdon does not cite this article in his bibliography and probably did not know of it when he handed in his manuscript.

⁴¹ The latest publications on this subject are Glenn S. Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism: the Development of Huguenot Ecclesiastical Institutions, 1557-1572* (Kirksville, Mo., 2003); and the collection of articles by Raymond A. Mentzer, *La construction de l'identité réformée aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles: le rôle des consistoires* (Paris, 2006).

⁴² N. M. Sutherland, *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition* (New Haven and London, 1980).

⁴³ Janine Garrisson, *Protestants du Midi, 1559-1598* (Toulouse, 1980).

⁴⁴ Philip Benedict, 'The Dynamics of Protestant Militancy: France, 1555-1563', and Denis Crouzet, 'Calvinism and the Uses of the Political and the Religious (France, ca.1560-ca.1572)', both published in Philip Benedict, Guido Marnef, Henk van Nierop and Marc Venard, eds., *Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands, 1555-1585* (Amsterdam, 1999), pp. 35-50 and 99-113.

⁴⁵ Jeannine E. Olson, 'Nicolas Des Gallars and the Genevan Connection of the Stranger Churches' in Randolph Vigne and Charles Littleton, eds., *From Strangers*

surprising is the total lack of interest in someone such as François de Coligny, seigneur d'Andelot, who played a vital role in the conversion of large sections of the French nobility, as Kingdon had highlighted. Apart from a few pages in Arlette Jouanna's *Le devoir de révolte*, the historiographical silence that has surrounded the central protagonist, Louis de Bourbon, prince de Condé, is just as inexplicable.⁴⁶ Unfortunately Robert Kingdon himself never sought to follow up the remarks he made in 1956 in his ground-breaking study. He did publish a follow up book eleven years later, *Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement*,⁴⁷ but, with the exception of one or two remarks in a couple of articles, he never analysed in greater detail the formation of the Huguenot party.

This lack of interest displayed by historians is very surprising and it is high time that the question be reconsidered. One of the goals of the project that I have now undertaken is to look in greater depth into the questions raised by Kingdon fifty years ago. Basing myself on the numerous leads given in *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France* and through the analysis of unstudied documents, my aim is to analyse the birth, organisation and running of the Huguenot party from its origins in the last years of the 1550s to the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572.⁴⁸ I would like to underline the fundamental role that Kingdon's findings have played in the development of this analysis.

Kingdon's work first of all helped to determine the 'birth date' of the Huguenot party and, therefore, the end date for the process of its construction. Many historians still tend to consider that the party suddenly came into being with the first officially chronicled political assemblies – notably with the assembly of Nîmes in November 1562. But Kingdon

to Citizens: the Integration of Immigrant Communities in Britain, Ireland and Colonial America, 1550-1750 (London and Brighton, 2001), pp. 39-47 ; idem., 'The Family, Second Marriage and Death of Nicolas Des Gallars within the Context of his Life and Work: Evidence from the Notarial Records in Paris and in Pau', *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance* 63 (2001), 73-79.

⁴⁶ Arlette Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte. La noblesse française et la gestation de l'État moderne (1559-1661)* (Paris, 1989), particularly chapter V (pp. 119-46) and the start of chapter VI (pp. 147-54).

⁴⁷ Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement (1564-1572). A Contribution to the History of Congregationalism, Presbyterianism and Calvinist Resistance Theory* (Geneva, 1967).

⁴⁸ This study is to be published in 2012: Hugues Daussy, *Le Parti Huguenot. Histoire d'une disillusion (1557-1572)* (Geneva, Droz).

convincingly demonstrated that the party had much older roots and that the political assemblies held in 1562 were only the most spectacular, and therefore most readily identifiable, gatherings. The movement had, in fact, by then already been active for a number of years. The assembly of Nîmes was not the starting point but the result of the initial phase of politicisation. As we have highlighted, the first national and provincial synods played a dual function. They were simultaneously competent ecclesiastical organisations and what could be termed ‘proto-political assemblies’ that had to intervene on the ground in a way that was theoretically incompatible with their *raison d’être*. This important stage in the process of politicisation of the action of the Protestant Church is still widely overlooked. Philip Benedict has undertaken the study of the political intervention of the first synods in a paper given at a conference at the University of Geneva.⁴⁹ Using the documentation previously used by Kingdon as well as the acts of other provincial synods held between October 1560 and April 1562, he reaffirmed that the separation between ecclesiastical affairs and political questions was purely theoretical. He notably highlighted the creation of representative delegations that the French Protestant Church sent to present their grievances to the king, grievances that certainly were not of a purely ecclesiastical nature. One has had to wait for fifty years for a historian to follow up on the ideas suggested by Kingdon. My own on-going research confirms the hypothesis of an early politicisation. It is absolutely vital to start any study of the Huguenot party with this realisation that it was necessary to take the struggle onto the political terrain. It was by using the organisational foundations created by the ecclesiastical assemblies and guided by the aristocratic pastoral elite that the members of the military elite were able to launch an efficacious political organisation capable of fielding the necessary troops so suddenly in 1562.

A second fundamental point for the study of the Huguenot party made in Robert Kingdon’s monograph was that the process of politicisation of the French Reformation was not just the result of events and pressures within the kingdom of France. He made the commitment of Calvin and of the *Compagnie des Pasteurs* abundantly clear. It was they

⁴⁹ Philip Benedict, ‘L’action politique huguenote vue à travers les premiers documents synodaux et consistoriaux des Églises réformées (1559-1563)’, paper given at the university of Geneva, 20 March 2006, at the conference entitled *L’émergence des institutions ecclésiastiques réformées et leur insertion dans l’ordre politique. France et Pays-Bas*.

who decided to target the high French aristocracy whose political clout, it was hoped, would enable the legal implantation of Calvinism in the kingdom of France. The French ecclesiastical system was structured and politicised through the intervention of the noble pastors who had been trained on the shores of Lake Geneva. Kingdon demonstrated that, after 1562, the military leaders of the party remained in close contact with Geneva and that de Bèze had the ear of Louis de Condé.

Condé, as well as the other *grands* of the party, rapidly understood that for the French Reformation to survive, they needed the support of foreign Protestant princes. From the very moment of the party's inception, even before it had taken up arms in 1562, they had been in contact with foreign Protestant princes to ensure their support. The networks thus created with all their international ramifications, must be considered as an integral part of the Huguenot party. It is impossible to understand the party in a purely national context. By evoking the first diplomatic efforts made towards England and the German Empire as early as 1561 and their continuing exchanges in 1562, Kingdon showed the importance of this international dimension. Without foreign military assistance and the financial backing of Geneva, the political and military Huguenot organisation would have had scant chance of surviving the initial onslaught of the French Catholics.

The documents held in the numerous foreign archives that I have so far been able to examine all confirm that the analysis of these sources gives a different picture of the Huguenot party, whether it be in terms of its material and human resources or, indeed, of what it sought to achieve.⁵⁰ This better understanding of the party certainly could not be achieved from French sources alone.

Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France was a ground-breaking study fifty years ago and today remains an indispensable tool for the understanding of the political history of the French Reformation. It highlights and analyses the origins and consequences of the large noble minority that served the Protestant cause. Kingdon revealed the complex inception of the political organisation of the Reformed Church in the kingdom of France. With such solid foundations laid down half a century

⁵⁰ Notably those of London, Geneva, Marburg and Munich, to cite only those that have already been analysed.

ago, it now seems to be high time to research further into the history of the Huguenot party.

5 Genevan print and the coming of the Wars of Religion¹

Andrew Pettegree

During his career in Geneva, John Calvin often found himself in disagreement with the city's governing powers.² Expelled once, when his view of the prerogatives of the ministerial office proved more than the town could stomach, even after his return he frequently tried the patience of his employers with his determined efforts to direct and shape the lives of the citizenry.³ But the city and the reformer were in perfect agreement in welcoming Calvin's prolific output as a writer. Here the interests of city and minister coalesced. For Calvin, writing and publishing was an essential part of his vocation as a teacher. And from the time that he first published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* to offer the basics of the faith to those 'who hungered and thirsted for Christ' this was a vocation that he pursued with remarkable assiduity: through all the vagaries of Genevan politics, despite a hectic schedule as a preaching minister, through sickness and in health.⁴

Calvin was a writer both of extraordinary skill and of prodigious range. The work of Francis Higman has shown how Calvin's contribution to French style helped to re-shape the language.⁵ His contribution to

¹ This paper was first published in Andrew Pettegree, *The French Book and the European Book World* (Leiden, 2007).

² As stated in the foreword, the first version of this paper was given at a conference in St Andrews to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Robert Kingdon's seminal work, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion*. My thanks to colleagues in the St Andrews Reformation Studies Institute, and especially to Robert Kingdon, whose account of how he came to write the work was one of the highlights of the occasion.

³ William G. Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (Manchester, 1994).

⁴ For Calvin's chronic health problems see especially Charles L. Cooke, 'Calvin's Illnesses and their Relation to Christian Vocation', in Timothy George, ed., *John Calvin and the Church. A Prism of Reform* (Louisville, Ky., 1990), pp. 59-70.

⁵ Francis Higman, *The Style of Calvin* (Oxford, 1967).

theological and polemical debate was also strikingly original in its contrast to the prolixity of many of his contemporaries.⁶ But these polemical works were only a small part of a published output that ranged across systematic theology, and three different types of exegesis: sermons, lectures, and his great series of Biblical commentaries.⁷

For modern scholars it is Calvin's theological clarity and total command of scripture that has most attracted attention in this astonishing scholarly output. For the members of the Genevan printing industry who brought Calvin's works to the reading public of far greater concern was the sheer quantity and popularity of his writings. These two considerations turned what had, until this point, been a publishing backwater, into one of the most influential, or notorious, centres of print culture in Europe. When, in 1551, the French authorities attempted to stem the worrying growth of evangelical activity within the kingdom, it was Geneva that they identified as the source of the poison, and books as the principal instrument of its dissemination. The Edict of Châteaubriand, intended to put an end to evangelical activity in France, concentrated much of its fire on Geneva.⁸ French citizens were forbidden any contact with the town, on the severest of penalties. The possession of books published in the city would be taken as *prima facie* evidence of heretical beliefs.⁹

Fifty years ago, when he published his *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion*, Robert Kingdon identified the importance of books from Geneva as one of the principal aspects of the Genevan campaign of evangelization.¹⁰ In this, if perhaps not much else, Robert Kingdon and

⁶ For Calvin's polemical works see Francis M. Higman, *Three French Treatises* (London, 1970); Mirjam van Veen, *Joannis Calvini. Scripta didactica et polemica, volumen I* (Geneva, 2005).

⁷ Jean-François Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (Geneva, 1997); in English (trans. Karin Maag) as *John Calvin and the Printed Book* (Kirksville, Miss., 2005).

⁸ Eugène Haag and Émile Haag, *La France Protestante[...]. Volume X. Pièces justificatives* (Geneva, 1858), pp. 17-29. English excerpts in Alastair Duke et al., eds., *Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1610. A Collection of Documents* (Manchester, 1992), pp. 60-64. See also Francis Higman, 'Genevan Printing and French Censorship, 1520-1551', in J.-D. Candaux, and B. Lescaze, eds., *Cinq siècles d'imprimerie genevoise* (2 vols., Geneva, 1980), I, pp. 31-53.

⁹ William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation. Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).

¹⁰ Robert Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563* (Geneva, 1956), chapter 9: 'The Flood Tide: Books from Geneva'.

King Henry II of France were in agreement – both regarded books as the perfect instruments of evangelization. But if the Edict of 1551 was intended to stifle the movement of books into the kingdom, it failed completely. The evidence presented by Robert Kingdon shows a steady increase in production, rising to a peak between 1560 and 1562, the years leading up to the French Wars of Religion.¹¹ This increase in activity was accompanied by a steady improvement in the sophistication of the industry, carefully supervised by the town council. Crucial, as Kingdon also observes, was the provision of sufficient paper to serve the hungry presses.¹² The Council devoted considerable attention to regulating the quality of the paper produced by local mills, with the result that Geneva won a deserved reputation for high quality workmanship. In this book Robert Kingdon also manifests a laudable concern to explore the business organisation of the printing trade, especially how the publishers were financed and capitalized. This is an area often ignored in studies of the book trade: thanks to a number of significant studies in the Genevan archives Kingdon was able to show how important this business organisation was to a full understanding of the production process.¹³

Of all the many fine features of Kingdon's book it is perhaps this chapter on printing that has most sparked the imagination. The work it has stimulated from other scholars has been among its most significant legacies. The eloquent exposition here of the power of print found its echo in Elizabeth Eisenstein's equally influential study of *The Printing Revolution*, a book that defined our understanding of the relationship between print and religious change for a generation.¹⁴ Almost simultaneously with Kingdon's book there appeared an outstanding collection of essays, to which Kingdon also contributed, on aspects of

¹¹ Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 98-99.

¹² Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 94-95.

¹³ Kingdon, *Geneva*. And see also his article 'The Business Activities of Printers Henri and François Estienne', in G. Berthoud et al., *Aspects de la propagande religieuse* (Geneva, 1957), pp. 258-75. A significant study of the business organization of the Genevan industry (though devoted to a slightly later period) is Hans Joachim Bremme, *Buchdrucker und Buchhändler zur Zeit des Glaubenskämpfe. Studien zur Genfer Druckgeschichte, 1565-80* (Geneva, 1969).

¹⁴ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change. Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1979); *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1983).

religious propaganda in France: a collection that put Geneva squarely at the centre of the story of French evangelical print.¹⁵ This collection contained, in particular, two essays that significantly refined and enhanced Kingdon's work. The first, a detailed analysis of the printing consortium behind the Geneva Psalter of 1562, was the work of Eugénie Droz, the author of numerous essays on Genevan print that would in due course be published as a four-volume collection.¹⁶ This volume also contains an edition of the inventory of Laurent de Normandie, the bookseller who financed the travelling booksellers who carried the work of the Genevan presses to their readers in France, often at great risk to themselves.¹⁷ The lessons learned from this vital and marvellous document have been more recently reinforced by the work of one of Robert Kingdon's own students, Jeannine Olson, who has demonstrated that de Normandie's operation received significant backing from the *Bourse Française*, an organisation whose ostensible purpose was to support the poor of the French refugee community in Geneva.¹⁸

So there can be little doubt that in its essentials the case made in Kingdon's book, that Geneva was the heart of a purposeful campaign of evangelization by print, has been sustained by recent work. I want here to turn my attention to two distinct questions that follow from this central thesis. The first is the impact of this campaign of evangelization by print; the second, whether as we deepen our knowledge of sixteenth-century printing, we need to refine our sense of Geneva's overall role in the wider evangelical printing effort. On the first question, of impact, a warning note was sounded by my own graduate student David Watson, who when working on the French martyrology of Jean Crespin had occasion to contrast the bellicose language of the Edict of Châteaubriand with the actual statements of belief of those arrested and condemned for heresy.¹⁹

¹⁵ Berthoud, *Aspects de la propagande religieuse*.

¹⁶ Eugénie Droz, 'Antoine Vincent. La propagande protestant par le psautier', in Berthoud, *Aspects de la propagande religieuse*, pp. 276-93; Droz, *Chemins de l'hérésie. Textes et documents* (4 vols., Geneva, 1970-76).

¹⁷ H.-L. Schlaepfer, 'Laurent de Normandie', in Berthoud, *Aspects de la propagande religieuse*, pp. 176-230.

¹⁸ Jeannine Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare* (Selinsgrove, 1989).

¹⁹ David Watson, 'The Martyrology of Jean Crespin and the Early French Evangelical Movement' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of St Andrews, 1998). See also David Watson, 'Jean Crespin and the Writing of History

His conclusion was there was remarkably little difference between the beliefs of those condemned for heresy in the period around 1551 and those arrested twenty years previously. If the activity of the Genevan presses had been enough to attract the attention of France's Catholic authorities, it had not yet transformed the mental world of French evangelism.

This finding, I think, only serves to emphasise the crucial importance of the fifteen years after 1550, the period when, in Kingdon's interpretation, the Genevan printing industry grew into its full potency in the years leading up to the outbreak of the conflict in France. Now, fifty years after Kingdon's work was first published, his stress on the vital importance of Genevan books in incubating the destructive rise of the French Huguenot movement can be tested with the help of far more reliable bibliographical data than was available when Kingdon wrote his book. This bibliographical information consists of two main bodies of data. The first is the monumental works of Jean-François Gilmont, bibliographer of Calvin, of the printer Jean Crespin, and more recently of the whole Genevan print industry.²⁰ The second is the work of the St Andrews French book project, which, in gathering together data on all books published in French, allows one to provide a most holistic context for the specifically Genevan publications.²¹ But it is through the work of Jean-François Gilmont that one can approach a full understanding of what Calvin meant to the Genevan printing industry, as author, entrepreneur and commercial asset.

Gilmont's majestic three-volume bibliography of Calvin's works, published between 1991 and the year 2000, enables us now to describe in detail the history of Calvin's evolving relationship with the Genevan press.²² In due course Calvin's popularity would galvanise one of the greatest print operations in sixteenth-century Europe; but initially Calvin's relationship with Geneva's printers was distinctly cautious. For an author

in the French Reformation', in Bruce Gordon, ed., *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (2 vols., Aldershot, 1995), II, pp. 39-58.

²⁰ Jean-François Gilmont and R. Peter, *Bibliotheca Calviniana. Les oeuvres de Jean Calvin publiés au XVIe siècle* (3 vols., Geneva, 1991-2000); Gilmont, *Bibliographie des Editions de Jean Crespin, 1550-1572* (2 vols., Verviers, 1981).

²¹ Andrew Pettegree, Malcolm Walsby and Alexander Wilkinson, *FB. French Vernacular Books. Books published in the French Language before 1601* (Leiden, 2007).

²² Gilmont and Peter, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*. And see also, Jean-François Gilmont, *John Calvin and the Printed Book* (Kirkville, Miss., 2005).

deeply committed to high quality scholarly books this was entirely comprehensible. Before Calvin's arrival the Genevan printing industry was almost negligible. Like many cities around Europe Geneva had experienced an early flowering of publishing activity in the incunabula age, when the excitement of the new invention stimulated the establishment of printing presses in many places where publishing would not prove commercially viable.²³ In Geneva, in fact, the print output of the fifteenth century was quite considerable, but in the early years of the sixteenth century this dwindled away to almost nothing. Geneva printing would revive only with the onset of the Reformation, and then, initially, only on a very modest scale.

As a scholar with serious pretensions to an international reputation, Calvin quite naturally sought to place his work with established, experienced and prestigious presses: first in Basle, and later in Strasbourg. In Strasbourg, in particular, Calvin would forge an enduring friendship, especially during the period of his exile from Geneva, with the printer Wendelin Rihel.²⁴

It is therefore a little surprising that Calvin placed his first work with a Genevan press as early as 1540, even before his return to the city the following year.²⁵ Thereafter Calvin placed a steady succession of newly written works with Michel de Bois and Jean Girard, the latter the dominant figure in Geneva's renascent printing industry during the 1540s.²⁶ These works were by and large the vernacular polemical pamphlets to which Calvin devoted much of his energies as an author during the 1540s. More scholarly works, such as the Latin Biblical commentaries, and revisions of the *Institutes*, he continued to send out of the city for publication, usually to Strasbourg.²⁷

²³ Antal Löökkös, *Les incunables de la Bibliothèque de Genève. Catalogue descriptif* (Geneva, 1982).

²⁴ Gilmont, *Calvin and the Printed Book*, pp. 4, 181-85, 224-29.

²⁵ French and Latin editions of Calvin's debate with Sadoleto were published in Geneva by Michel du Bois in 1540. Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 40/6, 40/7. Calvin is also thought to have published one work at Geneva during his first stay: the *Instruction et confession de foy* (1537), attributed on bibliographical grounds to Wigand Koeln. Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 37/2.

²⁶ Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 41/1, 42/2-4, 43/2-4, 43/6-8, 44/2-4, 44/6-13, 45/1-4, 8-10, 46/3, 5.

²⁷ Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 40/3, 42/5, 43/5, 45/5, 46/2.

This division of his patronage continued for much of the 1540s. It may indeed have been the very best arrangement for all concerned. It is much to be doubted whether Geneva's printers at this time possessed either the technical skill, or the capital resources, to handle the more complex project; on the contrary, the short, popular vernacular works for which Calvin during these years discovered an unexpected talent were the ideal product from an operation such as Girard's, at that stage of its development. Technically such works presented little challenge for a half-decent printer, while they offered the prospect of a decent local sale and a quick return on capital. And so it proved.

As Calvin's own reputation grew, and the Genevan printing industry expanded, Calvin gradually entrusted more of his work to local men. He may have been encouraged to make this change by a serious alarm when the manuscript of his *Commentary on Second Corinthians* went astray en route to Rihel in Strasbourg.²⁸ It eventually turned up but only after an anxious three month wait that almost caused the reformer, always fragile emotionally, to put aside other writing projects altogether. But in any case the Genevan industry was now ready for more challenging commissions. In 1548 Calvin for the first time permitted the publication in Geneva of a Latin edition of one of the commentaries.²⁹ In 1551 a Genevan press was entrusted with a large folio edition of one of Calvin's Latin works.³⁰ Henceforth Calvin's writings would be delivered almost exclusively to Genevan printers.

This period, around 1550, is rightly seen as a real turning point in Genevan print history. At this time there arrived in the city a number of printers with experience of the Paris printing trade. They brought with them both advanced technical expertise and the financial resources that enabled Genevan printing to move to a new stage of development. Jean Girard was first challenged and then superseded by a new generation that

²⁸ Gilmont, *John Calvin and the Printed Book*, pp. 3-4.

²⁹ *Commentarii in quatuor Pauli epistolas: ad Galatas, ad Ephesios, ad Philippenses, ad Colossenes* (Geneva: Girard, 1548); *Commentarii in secundam epistolam ad Corinthios* (Geneva: Girard, 1548); *Commentarii in utranque Pauli epistolam ad Timotheum* (Geneva: Girard, 1548); Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 48/7-9.

³⁰ *Commentarii in epistolas canonicas* (Geneva: Crespin, 1551); *Commentarii in Isaiam prophetam* (Geneva: Crespin, 1551); *In omnes Pauli epistolas atque etiam in epistolam ad Hebraeos commentaria* (Geneva: Crespin, 1551); Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 51/5, 6, 10.

included Robert Estienne, scion of the illustrious publishing dynasty, and Jean Crespin, publisher and author of the French martyrology.³¹ Calvin cultivated a close relationship with both men. Together, along with Laurent de Normandie, these men reshaped the Genevan book world. The output of the Genevan presses rested on three fundamental pillars. The first was the continuing publication of Calvin's works, and those of his friends and colleagues. The reformer's own output was by any reckoning quite prodigious. In his latest reflective consideration of Calvin's relationship with the printed book, Jean-François Gilmont presents an interesting analysis of the reformer's annual output of new writings for the press. In no year after 1550 did this fall below one hundred thousand words; sometimes it greatly exceeded this figure.³² This included the culmination of his extraordinary series of Biblical commentaries, as well as a number of new theological works engaging the controversial issues of the day. These new writings, together with new revised editions of the *Institutes*, would have been sufficient to ensure his publishers a healthy return, but Calvin's reputation was now such that his earlier books also merited frequent reprints. If Calvin was for part of this period still a controversial figure among Geneva's elite, his critics did not include those who shared the profits of the printing industry; a growing number, especially among Geneva's French immigrant community.

The second pillar of Genevan print during these years was the vernacular Bible. The full story of this publishing phenomenon has been exhaustively charted by Bettye Chambers, a valued colleague in the St Andrews French Book project team.³³ The first edition of the Scriptures published in Geneva was a New Testament printed by Jean Girard in 1536. This was the precursor to an astonishing sequence of around 150 issues of the New Testament or complete Bible published between this date and 1563. A large number of these were complete folio Bibles, latterly published with the rich sequence of maps and illustrations designed especially to elucidate the text.³⁴

³¹ A.A. Renouard, *Annales de l'Imprimerie des Estienne* (Paris, 1843); Gilmont, *Bibliographie de Crespin*; Gilmont, *Jean Crespin: un éditeur réformé du XVI^e siècle* (Geneva, 1981).

³² Gilmont, *John Calvin and the Printed Book*, pp. 293-97.

³³ Bettye T. Chambers, *Bibliography of French Bibles. Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century French-Language Editions of the Scriptures* (Geneva, 1983).

³⁴ Catherine Delano-Smith and Elizabeth Morley Ingram, *Maps in Bibles, 1500-1600. An Illustrated Catalogue* (Geneva, 1991).

To those who had remained loyal to the official Catholic faith in Paris this lucrative trade in editions of the Scriptures was even more maddening than the popularity of Calvin's works, since Paris printers had been forbidden to publish the Bible in French since 1526: an early, and entirely self-defeating victory for conservatives at the Paris Sorbonne.³⁵ This order, reluctantly obeyed by Paris publishers eager to take on such complex, but potentially lucrative publishing projects, did nothing to impede the appetite for vernacular Scripture in France: it simply ensured that the production, and profit, would be exported abroad.

The third main pillar of Genevan print was the publication of editions of the Psalter. The metrical psalms, used in vernacular worship and increasingly in other aspects of day-to-day Reformed spirituality were a distinctive feature of Calvinism ecclesiology.³⁶ It was a project that Calvin actively promoted, building on the foundations laid by the influential verse psalm translations of the court poet, Clement Marot. After Marot had completed translations of around one-third of the psalms the project was taken forward, at Calvin's insistence, by his friend and collaborator Théodore de Bèze. Geneva's printers were eager to offer their co-operation for a project which, as a staple of congregational worship, offered the prospect of steady returns, even though technically this was a complex book. All editions of the psalms published in Geneva included musical notation, which called for specially cut type and some care in ensuring correct alignment on the page.

De Bèze finished his work of translating the psalms in 1561, with providential good timing, for this was the year when the churches in France enjoyed their most rapid growth. Correctly anticipating substantial demand for the first complete edition, and mindful of the potential for a decent financial return for pious causes, the ministers of Geneva now organised what would be one of the most ambitious publishing ventures yet attempted in the sixteenth century. The publisher-bookseller Antoine Vincent was given the responsibility for organising a single edition, divided between a large number of printers, of something in the region of 30,000 copies.³⁷ All of Geneva's main printers were expected to

³⁵ Francis Higman, *Censorship and the Sorbonne* (Geneva, 1979), pp. 26-27.

³⁶ Édith Weber, *La musique protestante de langue française* (Paris, 1979); Waldo Pratt, *The Music of the French Psalter of 1562* (New York, 1966).

³⁷ Droz, 'Vincent', pp. 276-93. In addition to the 10,800 copies of this consortium edition, Geneva printers printed a further 16,600 copies on their own account

contribute, according to the number of printing presses operating in their businesses; but Vincent also enrolled the assistance of a number of printers in Lyon, and some still farther afield. The rights in the edition were vested in the *Bourse Française*, the body that managed funds collected for the immigrant poor in Geneva.

Several lessons can be drawn from the success of this extraordinary exercise. The first, as Robert Kingdon correctly observes, is to draw attention to the organisational powers of the Genevan industry, in what was surely their greatest single achievement. Even to secure enough paper for such an edition was a prodigious effort, laying aside the difficulties of distribution.³⁸ This would have been ameliorated had, as Vincent anticipated, a large portion of the edition been published within the borders of France: in Lyon, but also in Caen, Orléans, and even in Paris itself. Having journeyed to France to lead the Protestant delegation at the Colloquy of Poissy, Théodore de Bèze had taken advantage of the short-lived mood of conciliation to request a royal privilege for the Huguenot Psalter. Astonishingly this was granted – printers of the Psalter continued rather mischievously to print it in the preliminaries of further editions long after the fragile mood of toleration had collapsed. It was probably this signal of royal favour that induced a surprising number of Paris printers to agree to take part in the publication – many to their subsequent regret.³⁹ But while the Psalter was in these different respects an astonishing monument to the scale of the Genevan printing industry's ambitions, it also hinted at its limitations. For by 1561 the evangelical movement in France had grown so rapidly that it was simply impossible for Genevan presses to satisfy the demand for books. The involvement of so many printing houses in France in publishing the Genevan Psalter was

between late 1561 and early 1562: a total of 27,400 copies printed in Geneva alone. Kingdon, *Geneva*, pp. 99-100.

³⁸ An example of a contract for purchase of the necessary paper in Archives d'Etat de Genève: Ragueau, vol. 4, pp. 507-09 (16 Nov 1561).

³⁹ Vincent's contract with the printers of Paris lists 19 individuals, some quite well-known figures in the industry. Those named in the contract were: Charles Perier, Oudin Petit, Michel Fezandat, Pierre du Pré, Jean le Royer, Charles Langelier, Jean Plunyon, Richard Breton, Felix Guybert, Robert Bréart, Philippe Danfrie, Mathurin Prévost, Rollin la Mothe, Philippes Parentin, Gilles Gilles, Jean le Preux, Pierre Haultin, Olivier de Harsy and Guillaume Clémence. The contract is reproduced in Droz, 'Vincent', pp. 282-83.

an indication that in some respect the influence of Genevan print had already passed its zenith.

To illustrate this point, which represents one of the most striking finding of the St Andrews French book project, it may be helpful to present some data charting the development of French evangelical publishing during the sixteenth century. This is based on an analysis of some 3,900 bibliographically distinct items, which represents around 7.5% of all French vernacular books published during the century (Figure 5.1).

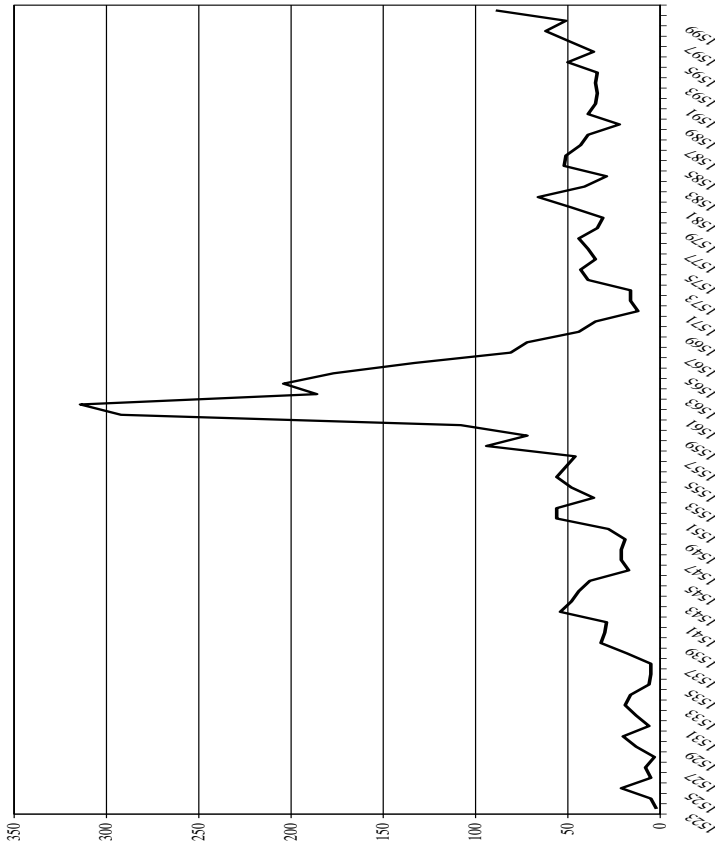


Table 5.1 : Evangelical and Protestant books published in French, 1523-1600

In the first twenty five years after Luther's protest, the production of evangelical books in French was spread between a large number of different centres, both in France and abroad. The scattered nature of this production in part reflects continuing ambiguity regarding what constitutes an evangelical book. In the 1530s and early 1540s it was still possible to publish a range of texts that would have made Sorbonnists distinctly nervous, in Lyon, or even in Paris itself. Editions of the *Livre du vrai et parfait oraison*, a work that included a text by Luther, were published in Paris in 1528, 1529 and 1530; three editions were published in 1540, and two more in 1543. The text was also published elsewhere in France, for instance in Lyon and Poitiers.⁴⁰ The printed output of this pre-Genevan age of French evangelism had attracted a good deal of scholarly attention in recent years, notably in the work of Francis Higman, William Kemp and Jonathan Reid.⁴¹ Jonathan Reid's study demonstrates the extent to which evangelicals associated with Marguerite of Navarre, bitterly denounced by Calvin and Farel for their timidity and hypocrisy, made good use of print to articulate their own vision of reform within the established church.⁴² And this is a good point to pay tribute to the work of Francis Higman, whose diverse studies in the bibliography of early French evangelism have unearthed a significant number of previously unregarded texts.⁴³

That said, our analysis reveals a dramatic change in the year 1544 (Figure 5.2).

⁴⁰ Francis Higman, *Piety and the People. Religious Printing in French, 1511-1551* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 97-112.

⁴¹ Jean-François Gilmont and William Kemp, eds., *Le livre évangélique en français avant Calvin* (Turnhout, 2004).

⁴² Jonathan A. Reid, *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549) and her Evangelical Network* (Leiden, 2009). See also Reid's article, 'France', in Andrew Pettegree, ed., *The Reformation World* (London, 2000), pp. 211-24; Reid, 'Evangelical Networks in France (1520-1555): Proto-Churches?', in Philip Benedict, Silvana Seidel-Menchi, and Alain Tallon, eds., *The French and Italian Reformations: Contacts, Contrasts, and Comparisons* (Rome, 2008).

⁴³ Francis Higman, *Lire et découvrir. La circulation des idées au temps de la Réforme* (Geneva, 1998).

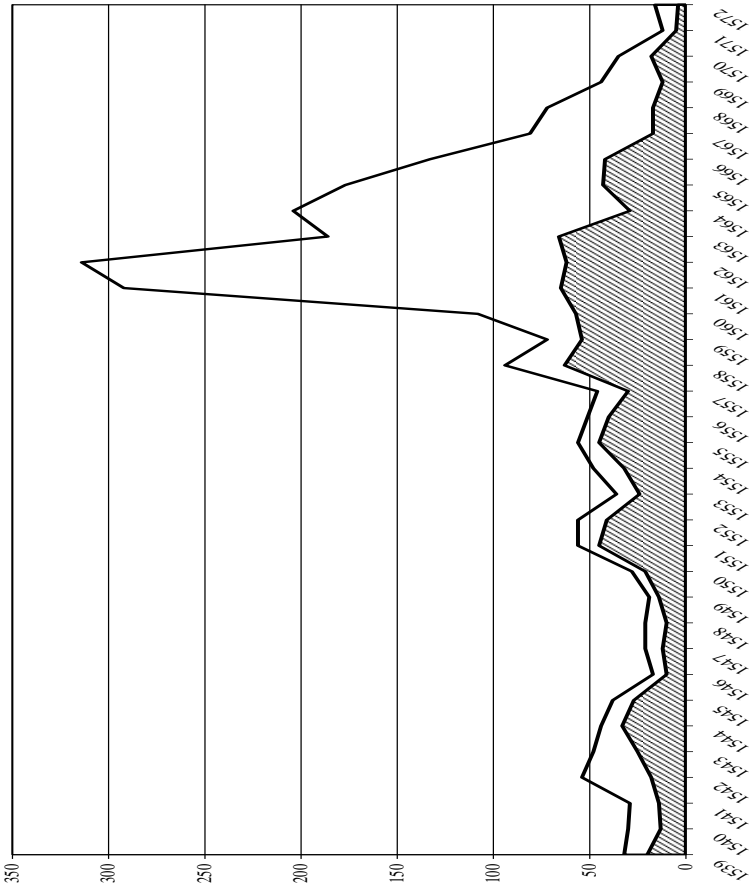


Table 5.2: Evangelical and Protestant books published in French, 1539-1572: shaded area is Genevan publication.

This is the year in which for the first time Geneva began to dominate the output of evangelical print, with 31 of 43 known editions. Calvin's polemical works provide the solid core of this publishing effort, but the print shop of Jean Girard also published works by Luther, Bucer and Melanchthon, as well as multiple editions of Calvin's highly regarded

friend and collaborator, Pierre Viret.⁴⁴ Viret's productivity in the 1540s underpinned a steady output of small octavo works from Girard's press that threatened during the last part of the decade totally to dominate the literary output of French evangelism. But it is the following decade, the 1550s, that would see Geneva's primacy most fully established. In these years French evangelism experienced a period of decisive growth, with the formation of new church congregations on the Genevan model, culminating in 1559 with the first National Synod and the promulgation of the French Confession of Faith. These years also witnessed, as we have seen, the transformation of the Genevan printing industry. This happy synergy allowed a rapid increase in both the quantity and quality of Genevan publications. But this was still a period when the typical book published in Geneva, at least in French, was in the convenient small formats, octavo or smaller. These were the books of instruction, exegesis and exhortation for an evangelical community growing both in numbers and confidence, daring for the first time to proclaim their faith in public.

This public confidence would only increase in the hectic, chaotic years that followed, when the French authorities largely lost control of their querulous subjects. The French evangelical communities grew exponentially during these years as their members dared, for the first time, to hope for the conversion of France.⁴⁵ It is not surprising that the production of the Genevan presses would peak during these years; indeed the peak is even more dramatic than the figures Kingdon cites, based on the collections of the *Bibliothèque publique et universitaire* in Geneva.⁴⁶ This library has a wonderful collection of Genevan imprints, although it is certainly not complete. But placed in the context of the total output of French vernacular Protestant works in these years the influence of Geneva,

⁴⁴ Steven Russell Brandt, 'Jean Girard: Genevan Publisher (1536-1557)' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1992); D.-A. Troilo, 'L'oeuvre de Pierre Viret: le problème des sources', *BSHPF* 144 (1998), 759-90.

⁴⁵ Philip Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge, 1981), is especially good on the atmosphere of these years. Andrew Pettegree, 'European Calvinism: History, Providence and Martyrdom', in R.W. Swanson, ed., *The Church Retrospective. Interpretations and Depictions* (Studies in Church History, 33, 1998), pp. 227-52.

⁴⁶ This collection also forms the basis of the standard bibliography of Genevan printing: P. Chaix, A. Dufour and G. Moeckli, *Les livres imprimés à Genève de 1550 à 1600* (Geneva, 1966). This work is now superseded by the on-line resource published by Jean-François Gilmont, GLN: <http://www.ville-ge.ch/bge/gln/>

in publishing terms at least, is seen, in fact, to be receding. This development is best presented, at least initially, in raw statistical terms.

In 1559, the year of the first French National Synod, Genevan presses still accounted for 78% of the production of evangelical texts in the French language. By 1560 this had changed dramatically: in this year the Genevan contribution dropped for the first time below 50%. In 1561, the year of the most rapid growth of the French congregations, the Genevan contribution to evangelical print fell to a mere 25%. It fell further in 1562, the first year of the war, notwithstanding the astonishing effort to orchestrate publication of the Huguenot Psalter.

What was going on here, with Genevan printing apparently relegated to a subsidiary role at the very moment when two decades of patient evangelism seemed finally to be bearing fruit? Thanks to the data collected for the St Andrews French Book project, and associated bibliographical studies, we are now in a position to answer this question in some detail. In short, as the French church became for the first time a mass movement, the supply lines of books from Geneva became too stretched to meet the sudden surge of demand. It became necessary to print books closer to the market; and crucially, for the first time it was safe to do so. Further, with the political climate changing almost from month to month, the movement seemed temporarily to have outgrown the cautious, patient leadership of the Genevan church. These were times that called for a new type of literature; works that the Genevan leadership were unwilling to supply, or even to permit Genevan publishing houses to print.⁴⁷

The first significant centres of Protestant print in France emerged on opposite sides of the kingdom, at Lyon and in Normandy. The production of Protestant books in Lyon built on a long-standing interest in humanistic reform among the Lyon printing fraternity, though the works that would appear there when the conflict got underway were very distant in tone from the polite restraint of Humanist letters.⁴⁸ Protestant printing in Caen, in contrast, represented a significant new development. The province of Normandy had witnessed a very significant increase in evangelical activity since 1555, building on a broad-ranging interest in reform that reached back to the 1520s. As congregations were formed and demand for of New Testaments, evangelical prayer books and other literature increased, the provision of such literature from Geneva in

⁴⁷ Gilmont, *Calvin and the Printed Book*, p. 262

⁴⁸ Pettegree, *The French Book and the European Book World*, chapter four.

sufficient quantities became increasingly difficult, not least because the normal supply route ran through fiercely Catholic Paris.

The result was that in 1559 a local printer began to produce a number of works popular with the new Calvinist congregations. These beginnings of Protestant printing in Caen are still somewhat mysterious. The printer used a counterfeit of a Genevan printer's mark, an incidental acknowledgement of the reputation Genevan presses had established among French evangelicals. Jean-François Gilmont, who investigated these works as part of his study of Jean Crespin, has dubbed this printer, perhaps rather ungenerously, the 'Fausseur Normand,' the forger of Normandy.⁴⁹ But within two years the local political climate had changed so radically that three printers were prepared to commit themselves to the cause. Between them Simon Mangéant, Pierre Le Chandelier and Pierre Philippe turned out almost fifty editions, an output that included a full range of the standard works required for worship, polemical works, along with reprints of the political manifestos of the new Huguenot leadership first issued by Eloi Gibier in Orléans.⁵⁰ The high point of this production was a folio Bible and a folio edition of Calvin's *Institutes*.⁵¹ These were clearly workshops that were adequately capitalized and staffed by competent workmen.

From 1562 and the beginning of the war a new press established at Orléans turned out multiple editions of the political manifestos of the prince de Condé, leader of the Huguenot armies. With time the printer, Eloi Gibier, also turned his hand to a range of more conventional religious titles.⁵² But the most interesting development from our point of view is the

⁴⁹ Gilmont, *Bibliographie de Crespin*, 59/9*, 61/6*, 62/4*, 62/4**, 62/4***; Gilmont, *Crespin éditeur*, pp. 101-05.

⁵⁰ Pettegree, *The French Book and the European Book World*, chapter three.

⁵¹ Calvin, *Institution de la religion chrestienne* (Caen, Pierre Philippe, 1562). Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana*, 62/7. For the Bible, a pirated version of the English Geneva Bible, see Gilmont, *Crespin éditeur*, p. 103. *STC* 2095. A French Bible, published in 1563 with the title-page address 'St Lô' was also almost certainly printed in Caen. See Pettegree, *The French Book and the European Book World*, chapter three.

⁵² Jean-François Gilmont, 'La première diffusion des Mémoires de Condé par Éloi Gibier en 1562-1563', in P. Aquilon and H.-J. Martin, eds., *Le livre dans l'Europe de la Renaissance. Actes du XXVIII Colloque international d'études humanistes de Tours* (Paris, 1988), pp. 58-70. A revised and updated version in Gilmont, *Le livre et ses secrets* (Louvain-la-Neuve and Genève, 2003), pp. 191-216. See also Gilmont, 'Eloi Gibier, éditeur de théologie réformée. Nouveau complément à la

transformation in these years of the output of Lyon's previously determinedly highbrow and learned printing output. I have published elsewhere my reflections on the spectacular emergence of Jean Saugrain, a previously little regarded member of the Lyon printing fraternity, who now discovered a popular specialism in the sharp, confrontational polemic that characterised these years.⁵³ Two points can be emphasised when considering this body of work, that extended to well over one hundred editions in Saugrain's period of activity in Lyon. Firstly, his exploitation of song in the service of the Huguenot congregations was a prominent and distinctive feature of his publications. Secondly, the tone of many of these works was such that Calvin and his colleagues would certainly not have sanctioned their publication in Geneva. But they were extraordinarily popular with the French Huguenot communities.

Many of these pamphlets are extremely rare, and frequently no copy survives in any Paris library. They have only now come to light because the St Andrews French book project has been able to inventory systematically the rich pamphlet collections of provincial France, and many libraries abroad. I am reasonably confident that the record of Saugrain's activity is now fairly fully established. These pamphlets, though short and ephemeral, are often very beautifully designed and printed, and so distinctive in their appearance. The major job of work that remains to be done is to try to identify the place of printing of the large number of pamphlets published during these years with no acknowledgement of printer or place of publication. This represents a high proportion of the total output of these years: over one hundred works in the single year 1561, for instance, close to 40% of the output of Protestant print in this crucial year.

It is highly likely that a large number of these works published with no clear distinguishing features were in fact published in Paris. In 1562 a significant number of Paris printers were prepared to associate themselves with the Genevan Psalter consortium, but the previous year the atmosphere in the capital was still deeply hostile to the evangelical religion, and indeed those who did put their heads above the parapet, even in the changed circumstances of 1562, often lived to regret it.⁵⁴ For all

bibliographie de ses éditions', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 47 (1985), 395-403.

⁵³ Pettegree, *The French Book and the European Book World*, chapter four.

⁵⁴ Of the 19 Parisian printers named in the contract to print the psalter, at least ten were subsequently pursued by the authorities, or forced to leave the capital. See

that, there were enough in the capital's population drawn to the new religion to make publication of Protestant works an attractive prospect, particularly if the printers felt they could escape attention. In 1560 the printer who published the anti-Guisard *Tigre de France* was hunted down and executed.⁵⁵ But the number of books we have identified that hint at Parisian production suggests that there were some who were not deterred.⁵⁶

The end of the first war in 1563 brought new trials for Protestants in France, and for some unlucky printers a settling of scores. Saugrain in Lyon and the Protestant printers of Caen continued in business for some years, but by 1565 the prospects for evangelical printing in France were looking decidedly bleak. In the years to come Geneva would come once more to the fore, now sharing the burden of sustaining the unsettled spirits of France's Huguenot population with a new press established in the relative safety of the far west, at La Rochelle.⁵⁷ These events lie outside the compass of our brief here, and belong more to the period covered in Robert Kingdon's second book, *The Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement*.⁵⁸

The research of the St Andrews French book project triumphantly endorses Robert Kingdon's description of Genevan influence on the growth of French Reformed Protestantism. But this new data also shows that in the years before the outbreak of war, the Genevan church found many able and willing helpers among the printing fraternity in France. The research of the last decade has played an important role in bringing this less immediately apparent publishing effort out of the shadows. It played a

Droz, 'Vincent', pp. 282-83. Cf. Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (New York, 1991), pp. 130-34.

⁵⁵ Donald Kelley, *François Hotman. A Revolutionary's Ordeal* (Princeton, 1973), p. 113. The story is told in the introduction to Charles Reade, ed., *Le Tigre de 1560* (facsimile edn., Paris, 1875).

⁵⁶ For a rare example of the successful identification of a group of anonymous Protestant works as Paris printing see Eugénie Droz, 'Le curé Landry et les frères Langelier', in *Chemins de l'Hérésie*, I, pp. 283-394.

⁵⁷ Louis Desgraves, *L'imprimerie à La Rochelle. 2: Les Haultin, 1571-1623* (Geneva, 1960); Eugénie Droz, *L'imprimerie à La Rochelle. 1: Barthélémy Berton, 1563-1573* (Geneva, 1960); Droz, *L'imprimerie à La Rochelle. 3: La veuve Berton et Jean Portau, 1573-1589* (Geneva, 1960).

⁵⁸ Robert Kingdon, *Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement, 1564-1572: a Contribution to the History of Congregationalism, Presbyterianism, and Calvinist Resistance Theory* (Madison, 1967).

material part in assisting the growth of the French Huguenot movement during the period of its greatest success.

6 Settling quarrels and nurturing repentance: the Consistory in Calvin's Geneva¹

Jeffrey R. Watt

For Reformed Christians, discipline became an essential part of the church,² and probably no Protestant institution was more ambitious or more successful in implementing religious and social discipline than the Consistory of Geneva, which John Calvin created and dominated until his death in 1564. Composed of pastors and elders, the Consistory met every Thursday and was entrusted with enforcing Reformed morality in Geneva and the surrounding dependent countryside. Although the records of this quasi-tribunal provide an invaluable window to the reception of the Reformed faith and the prevailing mores of the rank and file in Geneva, the registers of the Consistory until recently have been very little studied, largely because these minutes, written in great haste, are very difficult to read. Fortunately, Robert Kingdon had a vision of making these valuable sources available to the scholarly public. In the 1980s, he assembled a team of scholars to publish annotated editions of the Consistory records. During the past two decades, the editors Isabella Watt and Thomas Lambert have undertaken the titanic task of transcribing these documents and thoroughly annotating them with information gleaned from a wide-range of archival and published sources. To date, the first five volumes have appeared in print, and work is well under way toward the publication of the remaining sixteen volumes that date from Calvin's ministry. I have had the pleasure of being involved in this project, primarily as a consultant, from its inception, and we are all indebted to Robert Kingdon for his leadership in this project. In this article, I will briefly look at the

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented at the International Congress on Calvin Research in Emden, Germany, 25 August 2006.

² The motto of a Consistory in France was 'discipline is the sinews of the church': Raymond A. Mentzer, '*Disciplina nervus ecclesiae*: The Calvinist Reform of Morals at Nîmes', *SCJ* 18 (1987), 89-115.

Consistory's actions against certain forms of anti-social behaviour, namely quarrelling and acts of violence, and at the Consistory's efforts to nurture repentance among sinners, to reconcile conflicting parties, and to promote a well-disciplined society in Geneva.

Calvin and other reformers, both Protestant and Catholic, viewed marriage and the family as the most fundamental building blocks for a pious well-ordered society. Accordingly, Calvin and the Consistory showed a special interest in assuring that relations among family members were healthy and stable. The Genevan Consistory's most common cases involving married couples were not petitions for divorce – divorce remained quite rare in Reformation Geneva and was possible only on the grounds of adultery and abandonment – but rather police actions in which the Consistory convoked one or both spouses to question them about alleged inappropriate behaviour. Quite common were cases of domestic violence, in which Calvin and his colleagues summoned individuals or couples to account for reports of domestic unrest.

To be sure, Calvin and others firmly believed that men wielded authority over their spouses and tolerated a degree of corporal punishment in the correction of wayward wives. In August 1548, for example, the eminent Genevan chronicler François Bonivard was called before the Consistory for purportedly beating his wife, Jeanne Darmais, and having a number of loud arguments with her. Bonivard freely admitted that he had beaten his wife but only because she had disregarded his order to stop seeing a certain man. The Consistory decided that under these circumstances, the corporal punishment was justified and advised the wife that 'she must conform to the will of her husband and, since he had forbidden her to associate with the other [person], she should not have overstepped his order. For this reason, she has been admonished to live in a Christian manner with her husband, following the word of God.'³

The fact that the Consistory so often convoked wife-beaters nonetheless shows that Calvin and his associates deplored domestic violence and the social unrest that it caused. Husbands such as Bonivard who were entirely vindicated for beating their wives were a small

³ *Registres du Consistoire de Genève au temps du Calvin*, vol. 4, 1548, ed. by Isabella M. Watt and Thomas A. Lambert (Geneva, 2007), p. 115. Bonivard had appeared before the Consistory the previous year because of marital discord. The couple had been married in 1544 and had previously been unofficially separated; *Registres du Consistoire de Genève au temps du Calvin*, vol. 3, 1547-1548, ed. by Isabella M. Watt and Thomas A. Lambert (Geneva, 2004), p. 79, n. 492.

minority. More common was the experience of Marquet Du Jusse and his wife, who appeared before the Consistory in July 1556. His wife, whose name was not given, appeared in court with her face badly bruised from a beating. Du Jusse admitted to the abuse but complained that she had the habit of provoking him when she knew that he did not have any money. The Consistory did not have the power to impose any secular penalties but did declare that the couple was forbidden to take communion and warned that if the discord continued, they would be sent before the Small Council, which could indeed impose secular punishments.⁴ Du Jusse had previously appeared before the Consistory for domestic violence in 1548 and in 1552, showing that the promises made before the pastors and elders to behave better were not always kept.⁵

Although women could not legally separate from their violent husbands, there did seem to be some modest progress for battered women during the course of Calvin's ministry. In May 1563, the Consistory summoned Gabriel Veron for repeatedly beating his wife, who had left their home as a result. Veron admitted to beating her but indicated that he had good reason to do so. To this, members of the Consistory informed him that if his wife did not obey him, he should seek redress from judicial authorities, not beat her. They ordered him to stop beating his wife, under threat of being sent before the Small Council. He was to meet with his wife next Sunday after the service at the Church of La Magdaleine to reconcile.⁶

These cases demonstrated that domestic violence normally did not suffice as a ground for a separation, let alone a divorce, a fact that was also evident in the Consistory's handling of the case of Amied Gaillard of

⁴ Archives d'Etat de Genève (hereafter AEG), Registres du Consistoire (hereafter R.Consist.) 11: fo. 45bis v.

⁵ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4: p. 9, n. 41; AEG, R.Consist. 7: fo. 25r.

⁶ AEG, R.Consist. 20: fo. 62v. Gabriel Veron was probably the same individual who had a long history of misbehaviour, dating back to 1550 when he insulted his mother: *Registres du Consistoire de Genève au temps du Calvin*, vol. 5, 1550, ed. by Isabella M. Watt and Thomas A. Lambert (Geneva, 2010), p. 114, n. 794. Over the years, he was also reproached for fornication, violence, laziness and profligacy. Veron was among those denounced by the Consistory in October 1560: 'Suyvant la charge donnee par Messieurs au Consistoire de leur bailler memoire de tous ceulx qu'on appercepvra estre debauschez par la ville, ne voullantz rien faire sinon grand chere en mangeant le peu de bien que leur a esté delaissé par leurs parentz, et vaccabunder, battantz le pavé, l'on en a trouvé tousjours pour ceste foyz les soubz-nommez.'; AEG, R.Consist. 17: fo. 164r.

the village Avussy in 1563. For many years, Gaillard and his wife had not been getting along. Recently, Gaillard had even ordered his male servants to beat up his wife. Now asking for a judicial separation, Gaillard claimed that while they had been married for 28 years, his wife had left him 17 years ago – one assumes that ever since that time they had shared an abode only off and on and had established an unofficial (and illegal) separation. His wife, whose name was not given, maintained that every time she was with him he beat and tormented her for no reason. When told that he had to allow her back into the home, Gaillard responded that he could not. The Consistory accordingly denied the couple access to the Lord's Supper and referred Gaillard to the Small Council for his unwillingness to reconcile with his spouse.⁷

Like Catholic authorities before them, Protestant magistrates in Geneva and elsewhere decried excessive domestic violence and sought to minimize it, and the Consistory often convoked couples for domestic discord, urging them to mend their ways. While such police actions against domestic violence were common, only once during Calvin's ministry did Geneva's Consistory award even a temporary separation for cruelty or abuse, and that case involved a man who was so violent that it was feared he might kill his wife.⁸ In fact Calvin went so far as to instruct a Protestant woman that she must not leave her physically abusive Catholic husband unless her life was actually in danger.⁹ The Consistory persistently sought reconciliation between unhappy spouses and, barring the adultery or very lengthy absence of one of the spouses (without any

⁷ AEG, R.Consist. 20: fo. 51v.

⁸ In 1553 the Consistory convoked Bertin Beney and his wife Loyse Leffort because they were illegally separated. Testimony revealed that Loyse left Bertin after he had repeatedly beaten and threatened to kill her. Bertin's own father, himself a member of the Small Council, testified that he saw Bertin draw his sword and threaten to stab Loyse. For his misbehaviour, the Small Council sentenced Bertin to a week in prison and allowed Loyse to live with her mother until he learned to behave. They remained legally separated until 1555 when Loyse obtained a divorce because Bertin had committed adultery. Corneila Seeger, *Nullité de mariage, divorce et séparation de corps à Genève au temps de Calvin* (Lausanne, 1989), pp. 420-21, 441-42.

⁹ Charmarie J. Blaisdell, 'Calvin's Letters to Women: the Courting of Ladies in High Places', *SCJ* 13 (1982), 71; and 'Calvin's and Loyola's Letters to Women: Politics and Spiritual Counsel in the Sixteenth Century', in Robert V. Schnucker, ed., *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of Jean Calvin* (Kirksville, Mo., 1988), pp. 242-44.

news of his or her whereabouts), they were to remain married till death did them part.

Violence in Reformation Geneva was not limited to spousal abuse, and the Consistory often summoned people who disrupted the peace with physical assaults. A notorious ruffian was Berthod Mauris of the village of Peissy, convoked in 1548 for acute misbehaviour, including violence, especially toward his father; the Consistory had admonished him already in 1545 for his disobedience toward his father.¹⁰ Several neighbours had complained of the younger Mauris' misbehaviour, noting that on one occasion, while beating up his father, he broke a club on the elder Mauris' back. Given to excessive drink and to blasphemy, Berthod Mauris also scandalized many villagers, male and female, by once placing his 'shameful member' on a chopping board and proclaiming, 'Isn't he handsome, the Redeemer?' He also insulted Pastor Jacques Bernard and had many conflicts with a certain Nicolas Baud, whom he insulted and once struck in the head with a large stone, causing a wound that required the treatment of a barber-surgeon. Given his lengthy record of misbehaviour, the Consistory referred him to the Small Council, which in April 1548 ordered that Mauris be banished for life from Genevan lands. In November of the same year, however, his elderly father, Jean Mauris, pleaded before the Small Council that Berthod be allowed to return to the family abode to assist him and his aging wife. The Small Council granted this request but required the younger Mauris publicly to apologize and receive admonitions. At the request of father and son, the Council later even waived some fines because of the family's great poverty.¹¹ By any standards, Berthod Mauris was guilty of serious violent, disruptive behaviour. Though prescribing a whipping, magistrates ultimately wanted to reintegrate Mauris into society, and his public reprimand and confession of his sins served to facilitate his readmission to the Reformed community of Geneva.

The Consistory also took action against forms of behaviour, which, though less violent, were clearly anti-social and totally unacceptable. A memorable case from 1563 involved Estienne Tacet, who,

¹⁰ Berthod Mauris was already an adult in 1545, as he had been married since January 1543. *Registres du Consistoire de Genève au temps du Calvin*, vol. 2, 1545-1546, ed. by Thomas A. Lambert and Isabella M. Watt (Geneva, 2001), p. 49, n. 69.

¹¹ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4: pp. 23-25; AEG, *Registres du Conseil* (hereafter R.C.) 43: fo.s 61r, 62v, 71r, 243v, 246v, 257r.

in a heated argument with a woman, grabbed her head, put it between his legs, and passed gas on her. When she protested that he would have to account for his actions before the Consistory, he derisively replied, ‘What business are my farts to the Consistory!’ For his words and actions, he was given strong and sharp remonstrances and was forbidden to take communion.¹²

It is, of course, quite understandable why the Consistory and the Small Council would intervene in cases such as those of Tacet and, even more so, of Mauris, whose actions were very disruptive. The Consistory, however, made a concerted effort to effect reconciliations among Genevans who were simply quarrelling and were not a threat to society in general. It consistently strove to settle personal disputes, including some involving people who were closely related. In 1548, for example, two adult sisters, Pernette Ramel, the widow of Michel Sept, and Pernette, wife of Nicolas Drouet, had to appear before the Consistory because of the hard feelings (*rancunes*) they harboured toward each other. Calvin and the other assistants exhorted the sisters to reconcile with each other, and the widow Sept was also urged to love her daughter, Antoina, the wife of Pierre Bonna. The scribe recorded that, after hearing the admonitions, the sisters showed signs of good will toward each other.¹³ In a similar manner, in 1556, Pierre Ferrière and his wife had a major conflict over money with their daughter, Claire, and her husband, Renaud Four. Without in any way investigating the monetary issues that were the source of this dispute, the Consistory simply pressed all four parties to reconcile, which they promised to do.¹⁴ In these two cases, the Consistory made no attempt to determine if one party were guilty but simply sought to foster amicable relations among family members.

By contrast, in the same year, the Consistory learned about the severing of ties between a father and son, and determined that the son was principally at fault. When asked why he did not want to see or hear from his son and why he showed ‘great hatred’ toward him, the tailor Claude Pellou replied that his son had repeatedly been dishonest, which prevented the elder Pellou from showing any true paternal love. Members of the Consistory concluded that the tailor’s complaints were justified and

¹² AEG, R.Consist. 20: fo.s 78r-v, 82v-82bis.

¹³ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4: p. 32. In 1545, the Consistory admonished Jean-François Ramel, Pernette’s brother, to settle his differences with Pernette. See *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4, p. 46.

¹⁴ AEG, R.Consist. 11: fo. 11r.

reproved the son for his misbehaviour. At their earnest request, the son got on his knees and apologized to his father, asking forgiveness for all the wrongs he had committed. The Consistory also admonished him to avoid offending or saddening his father in the future and urged the father to forgive the son in light of the fact that he clearly repented of his offenses.¹⁵ In these and similar cases, obviously no crime had been committed, and the safety and health of Genevans were not in jeopardy. But the Consistory felt duty-bound to nurture healthy rapports among family members, at times laying the blame on one party but seeking above all reconciliation.

Calvin and his colleagues sought forgiveness and reconciliation among all Genevans, not just those who were related by blood or marriage. In 1548, Pierre Verna, the son of a former member of the Consistory, was obliged to appear before the Consistory because of his rancour toward a certain boatman with whom he had had some differences. Verna confessed that he hated the man and that ‘unless God changed his heart, he could not bring himself to forgive him.’ Members of the Consistory strongly encouraged him to pray to God to change his own heart so he could forgive the man, and asked him to return in a week to declare if he was ready to forgive his enemy so that he could be admitted to the Lord’s Supper.¹⁶

Calvin and his colleagues wanted all Genevans to know that they must be in the proper frame of mind to take communion. In September 1557, the Consistory convoked the gardener Jacques Morellet and his wife. Under questioning, Morellet freely admitted to beating his wife after she had left the door open, which caused a draft while he slept. The Consistory was convinced that the fault was entirely with Morellet, notorious for his quarrelsome and disorderly conduct, and accordingly

¹⁵ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4: p. 54.

¹⁶ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4: p. 31. In 1543, the younger Pierre Verna had to appear before the Consistory for having impregnated his father’s servant. She alleged that they had sexual relations only after he had promised to marry her. He acknowledged having sex with her but denied any marriage promises. Eventually the Small Council declared the reputed marriage contract null and condemned Verna to a fine and three days in jail. See *Registres du Consistoire de Genève au temps du Calvin*, vol. 1, 1542-1544, ed. by Thomas A. Lambert and Isabella M. Watt (Geneva, 1996), pp. 220-21, n. 226; AEG, R.C. Particuliers, 1: fo. 43v. Verna would be sentenced to death in 1555 for taking part in the rebellion, led by Ami Perrin, of the so-called Enfants de Genève against Calvin and his supporters.

forbade him to take communion. Interestingly, Calvin and the other members also instructed Morellet's wife that she should confer with a minister in the next couple of days to see if she were 'capable of receiving the Supper' the following Sunday.¹⁷ Their concern, quite clearly, was whether hard feelings toward her violent husband would prevent her from having the proper state of mind to take part in the sacrament. Without explicitly saying so in this case, the Consistory was certainly implying that even parties who were entirely innocent could not attain peace of mind unless they forgave those who had done them wrong.

The Consistory consistently denied access to communion to those who refused to reconcile with people they were quarrelling with. In 1555 a servant by the name of Ayma was most irate because another female servant had accused her of having a child out of wedlock, a charge that Ayma emphatically denied. She also took offense at some unkind words uttered by the master of the other servant. When the Consistory pressed them all to reconcile, Ayma proved 'obstinate' and refused to do so. Since she did not want to mend fences with the others, she was forbidden to participate in the Lord's Supper.¹⁸ Similarly in the following year, two widows had to appear before the Consistory because of their scandalous disagreements, which included a public fistfight. Since both showed that they were still not ready to settle their quarrel, the Consistory enjoined the women to meet the following week after the sermon at the Church of la Magdeleine to reconcile. If they still could not make up, they were obliged to appear again at the Consistory's next session. Since no further mention is made of them, they apparently publicly reconciled after the church service.¹⁹ In May 1548, Jean Achillier petitioned the Consistory to convene Estienne Bertin who had been spreading rumours that Achillier had been banished from his native France for counterfeiting. Bertin confessed that he had repeated such rumours but now regretted his actions, recognizing Achillier as a good man and asking his forgiveness. The Consistory advised them both to live in peace and specifically instructed Achillier, the aggrieved party, to accept this apology as settling the case.²⁰

¹⁷ AEG, R.Consist. 12: fo. 92v.

¹⁸ AEG, R.Consist. 10: fo.s 54v, 55v.

¹⁹ AEG, R.Consist. 11: fo. 10r.

²⁰ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4: p. 70. The Consistory had admonished Bertin the previous year for defaming Achillier as a counterfeiter; *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 3: p. 252. And Bertin's wife, the hostess of l'Anonciade, had

We cannot know whether parties involved in such reconciliations genuinely forgave each other or merely went through the motions of patching things up under pressure from the Consistory. At the very least, though, it was quite rare for people who had formally reconciled before the Consistory to reappear as feuding parties. Most likely this meant that in practice the parties tried to avoid each other. But the Consistory really sought to maintain social order and to ensure that individuals did not bear resentment toward others, convinced that animosity toward others was incompatible with internal piety. When dealing with most disputes, the Consistory thus generally assumed that there was blame to go around and that all parties should ask for and accept forgiveness. Demanding that all believers be in the right frame of mind when they took communion, the Consistory on more than one occasion also expressed special outrage because men had desecrated the Lord's Supper by getting into fistfights on the day communion was administered.²¹

The registers of the Consistory provide ample evidence that many rank-and-file Genevans had internalized the notion that to take communion, they must be at peace with themselves and with their neighbours. Some people were reported as voluntarily abstaining from communion because they harboured anger or hatred toward others. The miller Jacques Pape was convened in 1548 for misbehaviour, accused of beating his wife, dissipating his goods, frequenting the taverns, and singing dissolute songs. When asked if he had attended church the previous Sunday when communion was celebrated, Pape frankly admitted that he had not and had gone instead outside the city with several other men to play *charret*, a board game known in English as Nine Men's Morris. As for why he had not taken communion, Pape said he was unable to do so because he was still involved in a conflict with a certain man named Talabard.²² At first glance, his reference to his quarrel with

appeared with Achillier before the Consistory in March 1548 for unspecified disputes. See *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4: p. 23.

²¹ The Consistory ruled that in such cases, the miscreants be excluded from communion the next time it was celebrated and referred them to the Small Council. See AEG, R.Consist. 20: fo.s 52r, 70r.

²² *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4, pp. 70-71. Two weeks later, Talabard appeared in court and acknowledged having had some conflicts, including a fight, with Pape, but maintained that they got along fine now. Pape also appeared again, and the Consistory warned him to stop beating his wife under pain of being sent before the Small Council: *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4: pp. 80-81. Pape had been

Talabard could be viewed as putting the most positive spin on why he had not taken communion – if they had known that he was bitterly angry with someone, members of the Consistory themselves would have denied him access to the Lord’s Supper. But in frankly admitting to playing a game instead of going to church on Sunday, Pape most definitely was not telling members of the Consistory what they most hoped to hear. Given his anger toward the other man and his misbehaviour toward his wife, Pape may indeed have felt that he was not in the right frame of mind to take communion. In a similar manner, in April 1554 the Consistory convoked Pierre Brune dit Couva, who, under questioning, candidly confessed that he had not taken communion in a year because of insults he had received from Johannes Mauris, whom, he declared, he would never forgive.²³

The case of Humbert Aubert in 1548 showed even more explicitly that some people abstained from communion because they were in serious conflicts with others. An officer of the village of Genthod, Aubert said that he could not take communion because of the strong feelings (*ung tel regret*) he had against Claude Venarre, whom he suspected of being a magician or witch. The two had a dispute over the renting of a piece of land, and Venarre purportedly told Aubert that he would regret his actions. Not long thereafter, Venarre passed Aubert’s young son in the road and supposedly touched him. The boy fell ill and died within twenty-four hours, and Aubert alleged that a mark that resembled ‘a black hand’ was found on the boy’s body, presumably where Venarre had touched him. Consequently, the officer Aubert wanted to prosecute Venarre for witchcraft. The Consistory referred the case to the Small Council, advising that if Venarre really were a witch, he should not be allowed to stay in Genevan lands. But the Consistory also rebuked Aubert: ‘Instead of tolerating and loving his enemies, he has a heart that is so thick that he cannot pardon [Vennarre]. [Aubert] must recognize the good will of the Savior and his providence and not act like the dog that bites the stone that is thrown at him, because all things happen to us by the will and providence of the Sovereign. In the same manner, he should

convicted of fornication in 1546: *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 2: p. 317, n. 1217; AEG, R.C. 41: fo.s 232v, 235v.

²³ AEG, R.Consist. 9, fo. 45r. The Consistory mandated that Brune was to return in two weeks and that Mauris was to appear before the next celebration of the Supper. Neither appeared again before the Consistory, however.

pardon [Venarre] with [all] his heart.²⁴ In light of the intense witch-hunting of this era, the Consistory's demand that Aubert forgive the man he suspected of witchcraft was quite remarkable. For his part, Aubert was not yet ready to forgive Venarre and believed that his own rancour precluded him from taking communion.²⁵

This taboo against taking communion when troubled by conflicts or sins was, to be sure, not unique to Reformed Protestants. Many Lutherans embraced and even internalized this prohibition, as did many Catholics, both before and after the Reformation. Abstaining from the Eucharist undoubtedly stemmed in part from the Apostle Paul's warning: 'Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself' (I Corinthians 11: 27-29). On the basis of Lutheran visitation records from the 1580s, David Warren Sabean found that German villagers frequently abstained from taking communion if quarrels with others caused them to have an 'agitated heart'.²⁶ In his

²⁴ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 4: pp. 72-73, n. 405. Claude Venarre was indeed investigated for witchcraft and acquitted but was banished the following year when authorities concluded he was strongly suspected of inciting, through witchcraft, a young peasant to hang himself. Venarre did not confess even under torture: AEG, R.C. 43: fo.s 106v, 122r, 123r; RC 44: fo.s 132r, 133r-v, 142r, 183v, 229v, 230v, 231r. The boy in question was described as Aubert's 'petit filz'. Although this could be translated as 'grandson', I have assumed that this referred rather to a young son of Aubert.

²⁵ On the issue of unworthy communicants, see the excellent study by Christian Grosse, *Les rituels de la cène: Le culte eucharistique réformé à Genève (XVIe-XVIIe siècles)* (Geneva, 2008), esp. pp. 400-07. On the Eucharist, see also Bernard Roussel, 'Comment faire la cène? Rite et retour aux Ecritures dans les Eglises réformées du royaume de France au XVIe siècle', in Evelyne Patlagean and Alain Le Boulluec, eds., *Les retours aux Ecritures, fondamentalismes présents et passés* (Louvain and Paris, 1993), pp. 195-216; and "'Faire la Cène" dans les Eglises réformées du Royaume de France au seizième siècle (ca 1550-ca 1575)', *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 85 (1994), 99-119; Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy* (Cambridge, 2006).

²⁶ David Warren Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 37-60. In contrast to the evidence from the Genevan Consistory, though, Sabean argues that guilt was 'an external fact for the villagers' and that conscience was 'not an internalized mechanism of control', as witnessed by the fact that settlements in court of legal

seminal work, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700*, John Bossy asserts that when Catholics partook of the Eucharist, ‘hostility became impersonal and retired beyond the borders of the community, to lurk in a dark exterior cast into more frightful shadow by the visible brightness of heaven among them.’²⁷ Stressing the importance of strengthening bonds in a community, Virginia Reinburg avows that for the Catholic laity, the Mass was more ‘a communal rite of greeting, sharing, giving, receiving, and making peace’ than sacrifice and sacrament.²⁸

This evidence from Geneva allows us to compare the Consistory with contemporary disciplinary institutions. Consistories have often been depicted, by defenders of the confessionalisation paradigm, for example, as the Reformed version of the Inquisition. Having conducted research on both the Consistory of Geneva and the Roman Inquisition, I do see some important parallels between them. Both institutions aggressively attacked religious beliefs and practices deemed unacceptable, and both ultimately were largely successful in bringing about religious uniformity. Anyone in Italy who denied that humans have free will ran the risk of being called before the Inquisition, while people in Geneva who said prayers for the dead or refrained from eating meat during Lent – both of which were considered ‘popish’ superstitious practices – were likely to be hauled before the Consistory. The Roman Inquisition had effectively squelched Protestantism in Italy by the late sixteenth century, and by Calvin’s death in 1564 Geneva was the most thoroughly Reformed community anywhere; all Catholics had either left the city or had to keep their Catholic sympathies entirely to themselves.

There were, however, some very important differences between Rome’s Inquisition and Geneva’s Consistory. In regard to theology and practices, the Inquisition demanded compliance in word, deed and thought, whereas the Consistory was generally content with conformity in word and deed. Much more than the Consistory, the Inquisition tried to

disputes represented the reconciliation of the parties (see pp. 50-51). In Geneva, barring rancour, litigants to civil disputes regularly took communion, while others refrained from taking communion simply because they harboured bad feelings toward others, indicating that they had internalized the notion one must approach the Supper with the right frame of mind.

²⁷ John Bossy, *Christianity in the West* (Oxford, 1985), p. 69.

²⁸ Virginia Reinburg, ‘Liturgy and the Laity in Late Medieval and Reformation France’, *SCJ* 23 (1992), 532. See also Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion 1562-1629* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 19-20.

examine the minds and souls of people, regulating belief as well as behaviour, a fact that helps explain the Inquisition's willingness to use torture in certain cases to uncover heresy. Investigations of the Inquisition occasionally resulted in executions, whereas the Consistory, not authorized to impose secular penalties, could only admonish and, at most, excommunicate miscreants. While the Inquisition was founded specifically to deal with heresy, the Consistory actually did not have jurisdiction over the most serious cases of heresy. In 1553, the case of Michael Servetus, the only person executed for heresy in Reformation Geneva, bypassed the Consistory entirely and went directly to the Small Council. While the Inquisition had jurisdiction over cases of witchcraft on the grounds that it, as a form of Devil-worship, was the most heinous form of heresy or apostasy, alleged cases of maleficent witchcraft were ordinarily not under the purview of the Consistory.²⁹

Witchcraft and heresy notwithstanding, I find that the Genevan Consistory was actually a much more intrusive institution than the Roman Inquisition and had the ability to effect greater change on contemporary society. The Inquisition did not have jurisdiction over misdeeds unless heresy, blasphemy, apostasy or abuse of sacraments was alleged. By contrast, the Consistory of Geneva had the power to convoke those suspected of deviating from Reformed mores in any way. True, some men were incorrigible wife-beaters, and, as in any society, some people had trouble getting along with each other. But none of the examples discussed in this paper involving violence or quarrels would have been subject to the Inquisition unless, as was sometimes the case, someone blasphemed during heated arguments.

I suggest that the Consistory of Geneva was more akin to the Catholic confessor than the inquisitor. In dealing with a wide range of moral misdemeanours, the Consistory often resembled more a form of mandatory counselling service than a tribunal per se. When convoking people for moral transgressions, the Consistory usually was less interested in punishing troublemakers than in reconciling them with the community of the faithful, with God, and with themselves. By forcing parishioners to acknowledge their faults and by allowing or forbidding them to take

²⁹ It did, however, regularly convoke people for allegedly engaging in forms of therapeutic magic. See Jeffrey R. Watt, 'Magic and the Consistory in Calvin's Geneva', in Kathryn A. Edwards, ed., *Mundane Magic and Banal Witches: Daily Life and the Supernatural in Early Modern Europe* (Houndmills, U.K. and New York, forthcoming).

communion, Calvin and his colleagues hoped to nurture reconciliation and the internalization of Reformed mores. In so doing, the Consistory was helping to fill an important void left by Protestants' elimination of the sacrament of penance, and nurturing a strong sense of community.³⁰

³⁰ Although Calvin has traditionally been portrayed, with some justification, as entirely inflexible in theological matters, Randall Zachman has found that he tolerated a fairly wide range of opinions on matters that he deemed non-essential to the Christian faith. On such non-essentials, he believed that people should examine each other's views in gentle and stimulating conversation (*sermo*). Only when issues essential to the faith were at stake should one resort to contention (*contentio*) whereby one tries to destroy the arguments of one's adversary. See Zachman, 'The Conciliating Theology of John Calvin: Dialogue among Friends', in Howard P. Louthan and Randall C. Zachman, eds., *Conciliation and Confession: The Struggle for Unity in the Age of Reform, 1415-1648* (Notre Dame, 2004), pp. 89-105. On efforts of conciliation between Catholics and Protestants in the era of the Religious Wars in France, see in the same volume Karin Maag, 'Conciliation and the French Huguenots, 1561-1610', pp. 134-49.

7 **Developments in the history of Geneva since the 1960s**

William G. Naphy

When Robert Kingdon published *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion* (1956) and, latterly, his *Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement* (1967) he was both part of, and initiator of, significant trends not only in history more widely but especially Genevan history. His work was part of a move in Reformation studies away from the ‘great men’ – the Reformers – to a closer, more detailed study of the movement more generally. Likewise, Kingdon’s work moved Genevan studies – at least in the English-speaking world – away from being merely an adjunct or dramatic backdrop to studies of Calvin. In part, the pre-existing emphasis upon men like Calvin was as much a matter of sources as it was a matter of historiographical ‘taste’ and prejudices. Geneva is a particularly good example of this.

By 1900, Reformation scholars had produced an edited text of Calvin’s writings but this remained the major piece of widely available primary documentation for the Reformation in Geneva. Genevan scholars had begun the process of editing and publishing the city’s council minutes but this project ended in 1940 with the publication of the minutes for 1535, the year before the culmination of the Reformation. Thus, the wider scholarly world inevitably had to examine Geneva through Calvin’s lenses – through his writings about events in the city. Kingdon’s work was at the forefront of shifting studies of the Reformation in Geneva (and France) away from a focus on Calvin, de Bèze and a few of their most significant colleagues. Kingdon began this change by returning to the sources, in this case, the manuscript materials in the Genevan State Archives. By showing, as he did, how much detail was available there and how much more detailed an understanding of the Reformation could arise from using these sources, Kingdon highlighted the need to make these sources more widely available.

The result was that within a few years, starting in 1962, the process of editing and publishing the minutes of the meetings of the Company of Pastors had begun. Thirteen volumes later and scholars

around the world have access to minutes up to the opening decades of the seventeenth century. This is extremely important as one must constantly remember that Geneva's Company of Pastors was, in effect, the national synod of the state-church and it met every week. Recent years have seen this emphasis on materials relating to Geneva make even more sources available. In 1992, work began on a completely new edition of Calvin's works. Four years later the first volume of the minutes of the Consistory appeared. Finally, in 2004, work began on the continuation of the series of council minutes which is beginning to make the daily deliberations of Geneva's Revolutionary and Reforming Senate available.

Thus, it is fair to say that one of the greatest changes in Genevan studies since Kingdon's volume is that materials he had to consult in manuscript are increasingly available in critical scholarly editions. Obviously, this changes what can be done but also the number of people who can be involved in writing Geneva's history. Most importantly, though, it means that it is increasingly difficult – though not impossible – to present Genevan history as merely the interesting and somewhat troublesome backdrop to Calvin's life and work.

Moreover, Kingdon's own subsequent work kept pace with these changes. Indeed, he remained instrumental in the production of both French and English editions of the Consistory minutes. In his work on the St Bartholomew's Day massacre, Kingdon built upon his interests in France signalled in his *Consolidation*. However, he returned to publishing volumes on Geneva in 1971 with a study of Calvin and Calvinism on Democracy,¹ before his more general discussion on the relationship between church and society in 1985.² Indeed, this work continued his emphasis on the need to integrate discussions about religious change and religious ideas into the wider context of society, culture, and, as it were, 'history'. He continued and strengthened this focus on the Genevan context by studies on the city as a Christian Commonwealth³ and on the regulation of marital relations.⁴ Most recently, this latter study has been

¹ Robert M. Kingdon and Robert D. Linder, eds., *Calvin and Calvinism: Sources of Democracy?* (Lexington, Mass., 1971).

² Robert M. Kingdon, *Church and Society in Reformation Europe* (London, 1985)

³ John B. Roney and Martin I. Klauber, eds., *The Identity of Geneva: Christian Commonwealth, 1564-1864* (Westport, Conn., 1998), foreword by Robert M. Kingdon.

⁴ Robert M. Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1995).

enhanced by the publication, with critical analysis, of documents relating to courtship and engagement.⁵

This involvement with the publication of key documents for socio-cultural history as well as his own keen analysis of Geneva's history mean that Genevan history has to be done in a new way. It also means that it is now possible to do a new type of Genevan history – indeed, it is now possible to examine Geneva not only as a city in which Calvin became a leading reformer but also the city as a 'case study' of Reformation in process. This, I think, is key. Scholars are increasingly looking to Geneva and its records to examine the ways in which Reformation worked in practice and worked *into* a people and a society. In such studies, Calvin is almost incidental to the historical narrative.

Indeed, it is this new focus on Geneva as a place of Reformation in its own right to which I would now like to turn. How has the understanding of Geneva evolved and changed in the last four decades? It is tempting to spend some time discussing at length how this new focus on archival material facilitated my own work on Geneva. It has, but I want to be brief with these examples. The collation of information from a variety of sources helped greatly in teasing out the types of interpersonal relationships which linked individuals associated with both the Perrinist and Calvinist camps in Geneva prior to the full-scale political crisis of 1555. In addition, a focus on the city itself brought to the fore the extent to which the foreign policy goal of the 1530s and 1540s, that is, becoming ever more closely tied into the Swiss Confederation, played a key part in the domestic and religious policies of the city. This made the expulsion of Calvin and Farel considerably more sensible and also explained the rather curious dispute about slashed breaches in the 1540s. It also, importantly, showed how the need for regional 'hospitality' and 'sociability' could play a part in the 'Lect dancing affair'. A previous focus on Calvin's writings and, as a result, his 'spin' on these events had produced a rather stereotypical and caricatured view in which Calvin and his friends were upholders of 'godliness' and everyone else was a 'libertine' – or 'crypto-Catholic' or 'Anabaptist'. Rather, the more nuanced image that emerged was of Protestants debating how the Reformation was to be worked out not only in practical terms but also in the context of a situation influenced

⁵ John Witte, Jr. and Robert M. Kingdon, *Sex, Marriage, and Family in John Calvin's Geneva, volume 1: Courtship, Engagement, and Marriage* (Grand Rapids, Mich., and Cambridge, 2005).

by other concerns such as traditions of sociability (on the very personal level) and issues of inter-state relations (on the ‘geopolitical’ level).

Rather than rehearsing in any greater detail the types of socio-political alterations to Geneva’s historiography associated with my own work, I would like to turn to four other areas in detail. First, I want to present a concrete example of what is now available to the scholar in examining life in Geneva and then to present three examples from secondary literature of the widely diverse ways in which this wealth of information can be used.

I would like us to consider a man, a Genevan cutler and armorer, Claude Clément (also known as Humbert). He was a man of some prominence, as we know that he was elected to the *Council of Two Hundred* in 1541 – though he seems not to have been elected again. He and his brother, Jean, also appear to have been somewhat litigious having been involved in at least one major lawsuit (against Pierre Taccon) before the Reformation. Indeed, his failure to return to the *Two Hundred* may be a result of another lawsuit (during Calvin’s exile) with a leading supporter of Farel and Calvin, Domaine d’Arlod.⁶ Clément cannot be explicitly linked with the Articulants but there may have been enough of an anti-Guillermin association to result in his political demise.⁷ What makes him most interesting, though, are his many appearances before the Consistory after 1541. These do more, and this is the key point, than simply tell us about the *confessionalisation*, or perhaps more accurately, the *reformisation* of Geneva. His tale of woe provides us with invaluable insight into family life of someone of the middling sort.

Clément’s first mention in the Consistory records of March 1542 was purely incidental.⁸ His lodger, a registered alien and cobbler, Antoine Servoz from Vienne, was suspected of being a bit too Catholic or more accurately not sufficiently Protestant. Antoine was questioned about his faith and sermon attendance both of which were deemed less than

⁶ References to him, his brother and his father can be found at: Archives d’Etat de Genève (hereafter AEG), Registres du Consistoire (hereafter R.Consist.) 4: fo. 269 (1490); 5: fo. 64 (1492); 13: fo.s 129, 306 n. 1 (1535); AEG, Registres du Conseil (hereafter R.C.) 35: fo. 56v (1541).

⁷ William G. Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (Manchester, 1994), p. 37.

⁸ *Registres du Consistoire de Genève au temps du Calvin*, vol. 1, 1542-1544, ed. by Thomas A. Lambert and Isabella M. Watt (Geneva, 1996), p. 15 and n. 16 (16 March 1542).

satisfactory. It would seem, though, that these questions may well have suggested that Clément was rather lukewarm on reform as well. His next appearance, in 1543, was for the same offences. He said he had a long-term illness which kept him from sermons, although he did make his family attend. He failed to say the Lord's Prayer or the Apostles' Creed in French to the Consistory's satisfaction, though they seemed to have accepted his denial that he had been attending Masses. He was admonished to start attending sermons.⁹

His views on the Mass were again questioned, in 1544, at his next appearance when he had to admit that he had attended sermons preached by Observant Friars.¹⁰ Not only was the Consistory interested in this but he was later hauled before the criminal court in 1549 for his attendance at Catholic sermons.¹¹ However, he said he had not heard the Mass but had only gone to the sermon and only because, as it was December, he was cold and the church was warm. He may have been telling the truth – and one should not too quickly discount the importance of warmth to a businessman traveling in Switzerland in mid-winter. However, his additional defences were almost laughable. He had dropped any pretence of ill-health, saying now that he could not attend sermons because he had so many very expensive lawsuits on the go that he just did not have time, though, again, he stressed that he made his family attend.¹²

His next appearance, in May of the same year, was again incidental as it involved a tenant, though even this case is fascinating. Jean Bollié, a miller at Clément's mill, was engaged to the servant, Pernette Milliaud, of another miller, Claude Durand (called Piazgeux).¹³ He wanted the engagement broken since no one had bothered to tell him that she was pregnant and because there was an attempt to slash the agreed dowry from 80 to 40 *florins*. He suggested that he was willing to take her on but that the child would have to be taken by the father after birth. That is, he would have her as his wife but not raise the child as his own. The case was heard twice by the Consistory. In addition to the engagement issue, they took time to examine his faith and found he could say the Lord's Prayer but not

⁹ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 1, pp. 268-69 (1 November 1543).

¹⁰ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 1, pp. 347-48 and n. 215 (3 April 1544).

¹¹ AEG, Procès Criminels, 2e série: no. 792 (7 March 1549).

¹² He claimed that the suits totalled over 1,000 *écus* – an enormous sum. All that is known is that he was in a suit against Nycod Floutet in Gex in 1543: AEG, R.C., pt 1, fo.s 41v, 66v.

¹³ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 1, p. 364 (1 May 1544).

the Creed.¹⁴ (The Consistory rarely missed an opportunity in its early years to check on the progress of the *reformisation* of Geneva's inhabitant.) A third appearance was ordered but in the meantime, Bollié appealed to the Senate, which intervened and ordered the marriage to proceed but established a two-man committee to sort out the dowry.¹⁵ This case, in addition to its specific, fascinating details, is an excellent example not only of the cooperation of the state and church but also the rather muddled jurisdictional responsibilities of the Consistory and the Senate. This would suggest that later disputes about excommunication and rights of appeal to the Senate have their roots not only in the hazy structures of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances establishing the Consistory, but also in the realities of a system in which Geneva's inhabitants seemed to move effortlessly and confusingly between state and church.

By the time of Clément's next appearance, two years later in 1546, one begins to see into the deepest, darkest niches of his household.¹⁶ He and his wife, Jacqueme,¹⁷ were separated and he wanted a divorce so he could marry a new wife who would 'meet his needs and not fornicate'. Clément made a whole string of accusations against her, including linking her with immoral behaviour with the powerful Sept brothers and even charging her with plague-spreading – this, the year right after the second major outbreak of that phenomenon. He was forced very quickly to apologise for that slander. He was also admonished for blaspheming by swearing by the *Sang Bieu* – a euphemistic alteration to *Sang Dieu* – a euphemism not accepted by the Consistory. His disposition to authority had not been improved by the fact that he was only two months out of a 40-day stint in jail as a result of a clash with Claude Curtet, brother of the syndic Jean-Ami Curtet. Refusing to be reconciled with his wife, he was jailed again for three days, then released. The Senate ordered the entire family 'to live in peace'.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 1, pp. 366-67 (8 May 1544).

¹⁵ AEG, R.C. 38: fo. 196v (12 May 1544).

¹⁶ *Registres du Consistoire de Genève au temps du Calvin*, vol. 2, 1545-1546, ed. by Thomas A. Lambert and Isabella M. Watt (Geneva, 2001), pp. 175-76 and n. 358 (25 March 1546).

¹⁷ We know her name from AEG, R.C. 41: fo. 224 (18 October 1546).

¹⁸ AEG, R.C. 41: fo.s 58, 59v (de vivre en paix). He was again jailed in May for malfeasance relating to the goods of a ward: R.C. pt. 2, fo.s 33, 38.

He was called, yet again, before the Consistory, in August, accused of fornicating during a business trip to Lausanne.¹⁹ He admitted the charge but said he had confessed it to Aimé Vulliet and the syndic Des Arts who had ‘absolved’ him. Anyway, he argued, since his wife had left him it really was not that serious a problem. He was referred to the Senate which promptly jailed him again.²⁰ He was still complaining about his wife at his next appearance in October.²¹ The whole family was dragged in as a result of blasphemy uttered by Nicollarde, the wife of his son Dominique. They were told to live peaceably and to return the following week for further examination. Clément apologized, saying this was not possible since he was off on a business trip to Chambéry and the family was heading to the mountains.

Nevertheless, they appeared a week later.²² By this point, his two sons, Dominique and Jeanton, were in some argument which, along with the family’s other disputes, was causing general scandal. Their lodger, Jacques Guigonet, was also in a dispute with Nicollarde, the daughter-in-law, accusing her of involvement in some thefts from his rooms. Clément was still demanding a divorce and his wife was still refusing to have sex with him because of ‘his many imperfections’. They were all ordered to live in peace but the reality was that the family now proceeded to bounce back and forth between Consistory and Senate. The Consistory asked the Senate for advice and the Senate asked the ministers for advice.²³ Jacqueme was ordered to live with her husband as his wife but she refused. By this point they were both demanding a divorce; indeed, she had left the house taking Dominique and Nicollarde with her.²⁴ One suspects that the fight between the brothers was an extension of the clash between father and mother. Jacqueme was sent to jail, released, threatened again with jail, re-jailed and, finally, reconciled – to her fate.²⁵

¹⁹ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 2, pp. 281-82 and nn. 1000, 1003, 1004 (26 August 1546).

²⁰ AEG, R.C. 41: fo. 195v (9 September 1546).

²¹ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 2, p. 301 (7 October 1546).

²² *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 2, pp. 305-06, and nn. 1145, 1146, 1148 (14 October 1546).

²³ AEG, R.C. 41: fo. 224.

²⁴ AEG, R.C. 41: fo. 229.

²⁵ The whole sorry affair can be followed in the Senate’s minutes: AEG, R.C. 41: fo.s 230, 268, 275; R.C., pt 2: fo. 94v.

This seems to have resolved the situation for a while though one notes the extraordinary level of church and state action needed to bring back even a veneer of domestic harmony. The sons, though, were soon before the Consistory, in 1547, for more scandalous behaviour.²⁶ Clément, or rather his spokesperson, appeared in August again demanding a divorce.²⁷ This time he appears no longer to have been residing in Geneva as his plea was brought by Laurent Symon (called Picard),²⁸ who may have been related to one of the elders (François Symon),²⁹ thereby explaining Clément's use of Laurent. What can be inferred is that the family had again fractured with Clément leaving the Genevan residence. Jacqueme was called in two days later and ordered to be reconciled or face excommunication and, again, being sent to the Senate which, as we recall, had already jailed her twice. She apologized but said she had no intention of living with her husband and that she would 'very much love to be sent back to the Senate'. She was promptly excommunicated and sent off to the Senate.³⁰ Bizarrely, it would appear that it was only at this point that excommunication was even threatened let alone employed.

Sadly, this is where the published consistorial records end. And it is worth ending here as well as it highlights the importance of this publication process. But the case of the family Clément is not just about a marriage in ruins or even a man seemingly less than enthusiastic about the Reformation. It is both of these, but it is also a fantastic account of the workings of a family in disintegration. We see the family's clients, their lodgers and tenants, in various crises. We see them in dispute with their patron or his relatives. We see brother turning against brother because of their parents' marital troubles. We see a family heavily involved in expensive and, it would appear, politically damaging litigation. We literally 'hear' attempts to thwart the blasphemy laws with 'cutesy' euphemisms – 'darn' and 'sugar' are not that modern or inventive after all.

²⁶ *Registres du Consistoire de Genève au temps du Calvin*, vol. 3, 1547-1548, ed. by Isabella M. Watt and Thomas A. Lambert (Geneva, 2004), vol. 3, p. 128 and n. 819 (9 June 1547).

²⁷ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 3, p. 178 and nn. 1071, 1072 (30 August 1547).

²⁸ See William G. Naphy, *Plagues, Poisons, and Potions: Plague-Spreading Conspiracies in the Western Alps, c. 1530-1640* (Manchester, 2002), p. 97 where Laurent and his brother, Jacques, are connected with 'diabolical healing arts' – or, rather, using a 'wise woman'.

²⁹ See Naphy, *Consolidation*, pp. 76-77, 176-77.

³⁰ *Registres du Consistoire*, vol. 3, p. 184 and n. 1099 (1 September 1547).

We also sense the sheer level of frustration and fury of a wife in despair – Jacqueme would ‘very much love to be sent to the Senate’. What makes this way of ‘doing’ Genevan history so interesting? Well, it is this: throughout almost the whole of this tale Calvin was present and yet he was not mentioned once. One could use this narrative to examine the *reformisation* of Geneva or the role of the ministers and elders in keeping families together; but one need not. The Senate was intimately involved and yet this is not a story about politics and government, though Clément’s lawsuits against leading politicians could allow his story to be told with that focus but not of necessity. What has changed in the last four decades as a result of the increasing focus on, and availability of, Genevan archival sources is that a whole new range of narratives has opened up to scholars. One can now write a history of Geneva, its culture, its domestic world, its sociability, and its ‘intimacies’ through the ‘histories’ of the Cléments and their neighbours. This new window into Geneva has been very successfully exploited of late, and I would now like to highlight the work of three historians who have used this window to great effect but in very different ways.

At a superficial level, one might consider Maag’s work on the Academy as very much ‘elite’ history.³¹ In that it deals with an educational institution, its history, structure, and personnel it is. But, it is more than that as well. Its use of archival material, especially the Senate’s minutes, means that, in particular, the lives of the Academy’s personnel come to life and, more importantly, many of the problems which appear to have beset the Academy are revealed to relate to very mundane concerns about family life and salary. Even the attempts by the Senate to force the Academy to increase the range of programmes and courses on offer – fencing, horsemanship, law, medicine – to attract more, wealthy students has a very modern ring about it, and reminds one that there was more to Calvin’s Academy than just the training of ministers for the French Protestant Church.

Indeed, the rather messy way in which law was maintained at the Academy is an excellent example of how mundane the situation is revealed to be. The year after Calvin’s death, 1565, saw the first lectures in law by a city official and a Scottish refugee from Dundee.³² But these lectures were public and free – that is, they cost the Senate nothing. While

³¹ Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1620* (Aldershot, 1995).

³² Maag, *Seminary or University?*, p. 25.

happy to make use of these men – one thinks of fixed-term lecturers at this point – the city, with de Bèze’s support, was actively looking for two ‘big name’ professors. Two were sought but the head-hunting process only resulted in one man, Pierre Charpentier, arriving. This did allow the city official to stop his moonlighting as a law professor, and law was turned over to the new professor and the Scot – the professor was paid a rather handsome salary (about twice Calvin’s) but not the Scot. Although de Bèze, who had been heavily involved in higher education in Lausanne, was an enthusiastic supporter of law his fellow ministers were totally uninterested in the subject. The Senate, though, was keen because – as it would note as late as 1618 – ‘a famous professor of law [would] attract noble students and foreign students to this city and [keep] them here’.³³

Maag’s work even opens up the lecture hall to the interested observer. The Scot’s lectures produced student complaints: ‘several students dislike the law lectures and do not attend them, especially [those by the Scot]’.³⁴ Student course evaluation appears to have a longer history than one might have suspected. The Scot was advised to resign rather than be sacked, which he did. The Senate was equally unhappy with Charpentier who was not fulfilling his contract and his salary was slashed in half. Indeed, he was spending his time rather unwisely – he was accused of sexually harassing his housemaid. He denied fornication, apologized for his lacklustre working practices and promised to improve. He was sacked and, with him, the teaching of law came to an end after only five years.³⁵ While it would be possible to extend this discussion and follow the travail of law at the Academy it is perhaps more pertinent to note that by 1586 the state had ended law, again, and was considering abolishing chairs in Hebrew, Greek and the arts to save money.³⁶

What I would suggest in this all-too brief discussion of Maag’s work is that recourse to archival material has not only expanded our knowledge of the Academy but has substantially altered our image of it. It still remains in the historiography as the premier training ground for sending forth the ministers to consolidate the French Reformation as Kingdon stressed in his work four decades ago. That has not changed. But the understanding of life at that institution, indeed its life as an institution is fundamentally different. It is no longer merely a *deus ex machina*

³³ Maag, *Seminary or University?*, p. 26.

³⁴ Maag, *Seminary or University?*, p. 27.

³⁵ Maag, *Seminary or University?*, p. 27.

³⁶ Maag, *Seminary or University?*, p. 62.

institution producing missionaries. It is now a place of living humans facing all-too-real and all-too-banal and mundane problems. It is also immediately clear how involved in, and controlling of, the day-to-day operations of the Academy the secular authorities were.

When one looks at the recent work on baptism by Spierling one sees another way in which the increasing focus on archival material has changed this history of Geneva. Again, one might expect this to be largely a discussion of evolving ideas about baptism with a heavy emphasis upon theological works. It is anything but. What one clearly sees is the actual process by which ideas about baptism in a Reformed setting were worked out in process. One also sees that this is less about *fiat* from above and rather a complex negotiation in which local individuals sought to have baptismal practices shaped by their own ideas about baptism. The best example of this is the long process of creating a 'reformed' concept of god-parenting in Geneva. I should add that part of this includes a much needed corrective to my own work on the naming of children at baptism by god-parents, which focused on this as a key point of socio-political, even ethnic conflict in the city. Spierling has mined the archival material more thoroughly and reminds us that these debates were also about very personal issues of family and individual honour, relationship-building, and, more importantly, very strongly held ideas about what constituted 'latent Catholic practices'. It is clear that some of the objections were as much about a rejection of the idea about which names were irredeemably Catholic as it was about the manner in which the ministers implemented their policy.

However, I want to focus briefly on the debate about god-parenting. This may seem a mundane, trivial, and, perhaps, *adiaphora* matter. In reality, it was yet one more aspect of practical religion which had to be developed – and which developed – progressively in a *reforming* and *reformising* Geneva. As Spierling notes, the whole issue of infant baptism was problematic for a movement intent on basing all behaviour on Scripture. Scriptural support for infant baptism is extremely tenuous. However, when it comes to god-parenting, it is entirely lacking.³⁷ Indeed, Spierling stresses that while Reformed theology had almost no interest in the traditional practice and Calvin's liturgy of 1542 simply allowed for its possibility, the reality in Reformed France and Scotland as well as Geneva

³⁷ Karen E. Spierling, *Infant Baptism in Reformation Geneva: the Shaping of a Community* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 106.

was that the Protestant populace had no intention of giving up the practice. Thus, the discussion of god-parenting in Geneva provides the reader with a chance to move from a focus on Calvin the systematic theologian to consider Calvin the pastor and *practical* theologian. We see the retention of the practice but, interestingly, we also see its development, for example, its radical re-gendering. God-parenting became god-fathering as god-mothering ceased, though it seems only to have ceased officially at the font. Spierling's work in sources other than baptismal records shows continued references to god-mothers.³⁸ Yet again, the extensive use of archival records serves as an excellent corrective to what might appear to be 'normative' liturgical practice in Geneva. We cannot tell if god-mothers were even present at the font but we can certainly now know with surety that they were present in their god-children's lives.

Spierling also expands on our knowledge of the extent to which the font could become a focus for violence and debate. She rightly stresses that Genevans were keen to maintain traditions which were intimately linked with ideas of kinship and social interaction. Likewise, she notes that attempts to control aspects of baptism, even the names given to children, was part of a wider movement as Protestantism sought to proscribe 'papist' names. These conflicts allow us the opportunity to hear newly Protestantised individuals trying to work out in practice what this new faith meant. Thus, Jean Bresset had to be admonished for arguing that a woman was just as able to answer the questions put to a sponsor at baptism as a man.³⁹ Likewise, Claude Pitard, faced with being told that his name was a proscribed legacy of papist superstition begged the Consistory that 'if his name is not good, that it please Milords to give him another one'.⁴⁰ One even sees god-fathers, not the least Calvin in the case of his godchild the son of Lady Stafford, actively intervening – almost taking the child into care – to keep a child out of Catholic hands.⁴¹ In this circumstance, god-parenting was not a 'thing indifferent' but the key to saving a child's soul.

Just as Maag's work drew attention to an elite institution of Reformed Geneva, Spierling focused on an area of 'high' theology – baptismal, sacramental theology. However, both have examined their topics through the lenses of Geneva's rich archival holdings and have

³⁸ Spierling, *Infant Baptism*, p. 114.

³⁹ Spierling, *Infant Baptism*, p. 114.

⁴⁰ Spierling, *Infant Baptism*, p. 152.

⁴¹ Spierling, *Infant Baptism*, pp. 105-06, 153.

produced studies which are not just more nuanced and subtle than one might expect but which are fundamentally different than what would have, or could have, been produced without using these archival sources. To the rich image of Geneva we now have an equally rich and complex understanding of its Academy and its fonts.

One final study needs some brief consideration because it shows what can be done in an entirely different direction when one delves into the archival sources in Geneva. Watt, in his *Choosing Death*, turned his attention to the question of suicide in Reformed Geneva. This study differs dramatically from the work of Maag, Spierling or my own. Not only is its chronological scope daunting – from the Reformation to the French Revolution – but its focus is fascinating. He mines his sources to produce a work on the culture, even the *mentalité* of Genevans – not necessarily as Protestants or as Calvinists but as Genevans.

Watt's richly detailed volume provides yet more glimpses into early modern lives. We see Jeanne Diauville and Abraham De Fernex, both aged 23, who committed suicide within hours of each other. Their friends and neighbours explained that their relationship had been 'so violent that at times they quarrelled over very insignificant things, always convinced that their passion was at stake in even the slightest things.' Dying second, Abraham wrote, 'Father, this is the last sorrow I will cause you.'⁴² Throughout the work, Genevans in their hundreds are presented in the midst of their normal lives dealing, or more accurately in this case, not particularly dealing with the vagaries and vicissitudes of life. The key, though, is that once again the history of Geneva has been deepened and, indeed, has become more the history of Genevans.

What then has changed in Genevan history in the past four decades? First and foremost, following a path blazed by Kingdon, Genevan history is no longer primarily a backdrop to Calvin's life. It is now studied, internationally, in its own right. Geneva is increasingly being revealed not only in its immense complexity but also in its profound banality. Admittedly, it is not wholly impossible to reduce the city to a stage for Calvin – Cottret's recent biography uses not a single Genevan archival source whether published or manuscript. But this is the exception.⁴³ The increasing availability of Genevan records is spawning

⁴² Jeffrey R. Watt, *Choosing Death: Suicide and Calvinism in Early Modern Geneva* (Kirksville, Mo., 2001), p. 225.

⁴³ Bernard Cottret, *Calvin. A Biography*, trans. by M. Wallace McDonald (Edinburgh, 2000).

entirely new ways of studying both the Reformation and the early modern period. From a backdrop to Calvin's ministry Geneva has evolved into an excellent case study for early modern Protestant culture and society.

Kingdon's work began a process of leaving behind the few great men and their writings and delving into the lives and records of 'lesser men'. In so doing he and others opened a mine revealing a rich seam for historical research. Subsequent historians such as Maag, Spierling and Watt have shown how dramatically, effectively and innovatively that seam can be followed. In so doing Genevan history has ceased to be just the history of the city to become the history of its peoples. The result is that early modern Genevans – both men and, more importantly, women – are increasingly seen and heard to be surprisingly 'normal'. The developments in Genevan history of the last four decades, if they have taught us nothing else, have taught us that 'people in the past' may well have lived in a 'foreign country' but they did not live on another planet.

