Irena Backus

Crossing Traditions: Essays on the Reformation and Intellectual History

In Honour of Irena Backus

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Conflict and Dissidence within the Early French Reformed Churches*

Philip Benedict and *Nicolas Fornerod*

For centuries early French Protestantism and Genevan Calvinism were seen as essentially synonymous, and not without reason. Genevan presses produced virtually all evangelical books in French during the years 1540–1560. Calvin maintained an extensive correspondence with both laymen and ministers within the kingdom. Many early pastors moved back and forth between France and Geneva. Nearly all of the liturgical practices of the first French Reformed churches were modeled on those of Geneva.[1] The character of the surviving documentation further reinforced the equation. Because most of the records of the churches within France perished amid the numerous disruptions they suffered, Geneva-based source collections such as the correspondence of Calvin, Beza and the Company of Pastors became some of the richest veins of information about early French Protestantism. The first and still by far the most revealing history of the foundation of the French churches, the *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises réformées au royaume de France*, was compiled in Geneva in a manner that obscured or denigrated the role of individuals who disagreed with Calvin and Beza.

Ever since the great pacifist and free-thinker of Protestant origin Ferdinand Buisson devoted his 1892 thesis to Sebastian Castellio, however, historians antipathetic to the illiberal features of Calvin's Geneva have increasingly highlighted the presence of non-Calvinist ideas within the first generations of francophone Protestantism. To Buisson's and Hans Guggisberg's work on Castellio, a century of scholarship has added illuminating studies of many of the "nicodemites", "spiritual libertines", and *rusés moyenneurs* against whom Calvin

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1 For a recent review of the evidence of Geneva's importance see Philip Benedict, "Refugee Churches and Exile Centers in the French Reformation," in *La Réforme en France et Italie. Contacts, comparaisons et contrastes*, ed. Philip Benedict, Silvana Seidel Menchi and Alain Tallon (Roma: École Française de Rome, 2007), 535–552.

polemicized, not to mention such *sui generis* thinkers as the Melanchthonian, proto-Erastian jurist Charles Du Moulin or the utopian advocate of democracy in the church Jean Morély.[2] The work of Henri Vuilleumier and Michael Bruening on the church history of the Pays de Vaud has reminded scholars that after two purges of groups of pastors who shared Calvin's ideas about predestination and ecclesiastical discipline, the fundamentally Zwinglian church of Bern's francophone territories was left in the hands of ministers who parted company with Geneva on these issues.[3] Those aware of the church history of the county of Montbéliard know that the dominant pastoral faction of this francophone territory rejected predestination and agreed with Castellio rather than Calvin on the question of whether or not heresy should be punished by the secular authorities.[4] "It is permitted to think that in Geneva, that anxious city at the end of a lake, stuck in a dead-end valley between the Juras and the Salève, inhabited by a surly local bourgeoisie confronting agitated and turbulent émigrés arriving from every corner—in that Geneva, Calvinism's true, original spirit withered rather than blossomed," wrote Lucien Febvre in 1957.[5] Denis Crouzet's excellent survey of the *Genèse de la Réforme française* notes the variety of currents within early Francophone Protestantism and highlights episodes that suggest diversity within the first formal Reformed churches.[6]

Our research on the early institutional development of the French Reformed churches has shown us that numerous disputes arose between preachers

2 For simply the most important titles: Ferdinand Buisson, *Sébastien Castellion. Sa vie et son œuvre (1515–1563)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1892); Hans Rudolf Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castellio, 1515–1563: Humanist and Defender of Religious Toleration in a Confessional Age* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Mario Turchetti, *Concordia o tolleranza? François Bauduin (1520–1573) e i "Moyenneurs"* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1984); Thierry Wanegffelen, *Ni Rome ni Genève: des fidèles entre deux chaires en France au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1997); Jean-Louis Thireau, *Charles Du Moulin (1500–1566). Étude sur les sources, la méthode, les idées politiques et économiques d'un juriste de la Renaissance* (Genève: Droz, 1980); Philippe Denis and Jean Rott, *Jean Morély (ca 1524–ca 1594) et l'utopie d'une démocratie dans l'Église* (Genève: Droz, 1993).

3 Henri Vuilleumier, *Histoire de l'Église réformée du Pays de Vaud sous le régime bernois* (Lausanne: La Concorde, 1927), 1: 667–690; Michael W. Bruening, *Calvinism's First Battleground: Conflict and Reform in the Pays de Vaud, 1528–1559* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005).

4 John Viénot, *Histoire de la Réforme dans le pays de Montbéliard depuis les origines jusqu'à la mort de P. Toussain 1524–1573* (Montbéliard: Imprimerie Montbéliardaise, 1900), 1: esp. 196–208.

5 Lucien Febvre, "Une mise en place. Crayon de Jean Calvin," in Lucien Febvre, *Au cœur religieux du XVI^e siècle* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1957), 262.

6 Denis Crouzet, *La genèse de la Réforme française 1520–1562* (Paris: SEDES, 1996), esp. 441–451.

contesting for the status of true ministers of the Gospel between 1541 and 1565, as assemblies for worship outside the established church formed, multiplied and came to be amalgamated into a nationwide network with a common discipline and confession of faith. Surprisingly, however, the controverted issues over which Calvin fell out with his best-known Protestant rivals rarely seem to have fueled these conflicts involving more obscure ministers. Only two heterodox positions recur even a few times in the accusations lobbed back and forth in these battles: the Castellionist rejection of the use of force to punish false belief, and the refusal to restrict access to the Lord's Supper via a system of church discipline. Most of the cases in which deviancy was alleged involve charges of infractions against lesser rules of church discipline. Quite a few cases where rivals were accused of improperly appropriating the title of minister include no suggestion that different appreciations of doctrine or orthopraxy were at stake. Inter-personal jealousies, suspicion, and a vigilant concern that new rules be observed to the letter appear to have sparked many, if not most, of the disputes. In this period when the institutional procedures of the Reformed churches were being put in place, the builders of this new order wanted to speak with one voice and ensure that the title of minister was not usurped by individuals who failed to respect procedures. The imposition of an orthodoxy and orthopraxy owing a strong debt to Geneva emerged as much out of this internal dynamic as it did from the intervention and even browbeating of Calvin and Beza, important though that could be, especially where Castellio's ideas were concerned. Even after the French Reformed churches had their own autonomous system for resolving internal conflicts, the parties to disputes within it continued to turn to Geneva, in some instances because provincial synods could not resolve the issue and asked Calvin or Beza to serve as an authoritative external voice, in others because a minority disappointed by a synodal decision thought that it could get support for its view from Geneva. This was another aspect of the internal dynamics of French church-building and would continue until the turn of the century and the death of Beza.

In several studies, Irena Backus illuminated the range of ideas within the early French Reformation by analyzing the different theological positions expressed in the controversial and exegetical literature of the period. Our sources and approach here are different. We will draw chiefly upon three kinds of documents: 1) the surviving synodal acts of the French Reformed churches from their initial years; 2) the many accounts of the history of individual churches compiled within the *Histoire ecclésiastique*; and 3) letters sent to or from Geneva in which either Genevan ministers warn churches in France against individuals they judge dangerously heterodox, or pastors within France appeal to Geneva for help in resolving local disputes. By looking in some detail at a few of

these conflicts, we will attempt to understand the causes of the conflicts that arose between would-be ministers within the new Reformed churches and the process by which what Febvre judged to be Geneva's desiccated orthodoxy came to dominate them. It is important to keep in mind that these sources reveal only conflicts involving pastors who aspired to recognition as brethren in the same cause. They do not shed light on the further reaches of illuminated prophecy or spiritualism that, while also heterodox in the eyes of Rome, were so different from Reformed theology in inspiration that their adepts never attempted to affiliate themselves with the emerging Reformed churches.

To understand the disputes that arose as new churches proliferated in France, it must be grasped that the pressure to impose a degree of unity of doctrine and practice arose from two sources. The first was Calvin's own personality, notably his notorious vigilance against error, intensified by his supreme self-confidence in his own intellectual capacities and *hargne* against those who crossed him personally. While prepared to accept a degree of variety in ceremonies that he judged inessential, his strong sense of the need to profess God's teachings fully led him to perceive virtually any doctrine at odds with those teachings as he understood them to be a denial of Christ. The second source of pressure toward orthodoxy was the recognition that set in very quickly that if the assemblies of people claiming to profess the true doctrine of Christ did not profess the same doctrine, they had little chance of convincing either the general public or the ruling authorities of its truth. It was from this need for unity that arose the sequence of events that led, once the number of churches began to grow steadily after 1555, to the proto-synod that drafted the 1557 "*Articles Polytiques*", and then to what subsequently came to be recognized as the first national synod of 1559. These assemblies were convoked not by Geneva but at the initiative of ministers within the kingdom who recognized the need for a common confession of faith and set of institutional practices to prevent the movement from splintering. They not only established a common core of doctrines, institutions and disciplinary rules, but also prescribed a hierarchy of synods meeting at regular intervals that would prove to be formidable instruments for both generating shared strategies to advance the common cause and disciplining troublesome or heterodox brethren. To rein in lone wolves, they required all new ministers to bring an attestation from Geneva or another church and/or win the approval of the already established pastors in the vicinity, then sign the confession of faith.[7] This, of course, could generate conflict not

7 For the rules: BM Le Mans, ms 66ter, art. 10–12; *L'organisation et l'action des Églises réformées de France. Synodes provinciaux et autres documents*, ed. Philip Benedict and Nicolas Fornerod (Genève: Droz, 2012), 13, 52, 95, 166; for their application: ibid., 44, 55–56, 96–97, 118, 228–229, 248.

only with preachers who found their status as leaders of a flock challenged for failure to obey these rules, but also with groups of believers that disliked the new restrictions on their autonomy in selecting their spiritual leader.

As early as 1542, we can observe both parts of the orthodoxy-generating dynamic, namely Genevan initiative and internal French concern for unity, behind the first case revealed by Calvin's correspondence of a conflict over whether or not to recognize a preacher as a true minister of Christ's church. Calvin had returned to Geneva from Strasbourg in September 1541. Just eight months later, in May 1542, he took it upon himself to write to some anonymous "dearest brethren" in Lyon "because of the bond by which the Lord has conjoined us", wording that indicates a sense of a common cause between Calvin and the Lyon group, even if the latter as yet had no formal structure and may not have even considered itself a church.[8] The purpose of his letter was to defend Geneva's reputation against the "mad presumption" and "pure stupidity" of an unnamed preacher who Calvin feared might be speaking ill of how he had been received on the shores of Lake Leman. The preacher in question was a Carmelite named Paul Christophe de La Rivière whose Lenten sermons in Lyon had apparently contained enough evangelical content to win him a good reputation among those who wanted to hear the "true Gospel" preached. The Carmelite had then gone to Geneva. On arrival, he told the ministers that he had come to serve God's church. The ultimate goal of his visit, it appears, was to obtain some sort of attestation of his evangelical *bona fides* ("[*il*] *nous somma de l'asseurer*") that he could then take back to France, where he intended to preach. He wanted this quickly, since the longer he stayed in Geneva the greater the chance that news of his sojourn would get back to the authorities in France. The Carmelite was clearly moved by a concern to ensure unity and mutual recognition among evangelicals. But this is just what failed to emerge. Rather than immediately turning a pulpit over to him and inviting him to preach as he had done with so much success in Lyon, Geneva's pastors told him that the ministry would be sullied if people were received into it lightly without observing proper procedures; they invited him instead first to take part in the church's weekly *Congrégation*, where pastors and pastors-in-training took turns explicating Bible passages. He got huffy and "replied [...] that while we might think we had the Holy Spirit, he wasn't entirely destitute of it himself". He nonetheless participated in at least one *Congrégation*, after

8 Aimé-Louis Herminjard, *Correspondance des Réformateurs dans les pays de langue française* 8, (Genève; Bâle; Lyon; Paris: Georg and Fischbacher, 1863), n° 1119, 19–27; see n° 1115.

which he let it be known to a large group in a tavern that he had not seen much learning or edification. His remarks naturally got back to the Company of Pastors. He realized he had made a mistake and approached one of the ministers privately to make amends for his "*foles paroles*". His efforts to explain himself only made the situation worse. Calvin was pitiless in his judgment of him. La Rivière's explication of Romans 13:11 at the *Congrégation*, Calvin told the Lyonnais, had been thin and completely off the mark, not from malice, but from pure stupidity. He "was as ignorant of Scripture as a cockroach" and had "less Latin than an eight-year-old". The brethren would only be harmed if they let him fool them into thinking he was a capable leader. This Carmelite, judged by Calvin as presumptuous and incompetent, acted as a foil to affirm the excellence required for the exercise of the ministry and to justify the selection and validation process established by the ecclesiastical order.

But Calvin was not done with La Rivière, who succeeded in becoming pastor of Arzier (Pays de Vaud) in 1543 before being removed in February 1544. In the following months, La Rivière addressed a tract to the classe of Morges containing articles defending Mass and asked for a safe conduct to allow him to defend them personally, a request refused by Bernese authorities. Both Calvin and Viret intervened in this affair. In a letter probably dating from 1545, Calvin even indicated that La Rivière's ideas seemed tainted by Quintin Thiery's philosophy.[9] We cannot know if this subsequent suspicion had any foundation, and if it did, whether "libertine" tendencies had always been latent in La Rivière's reading of the Bible or had crystallized only after his clash with Calvin. What is clear are the strong words in which the still just 32-year-old reformer sent unsolicited advice to a group of the faithful in France, as well as the fact that as early as 1542 a French Carmelite felt it desirable to obtain some sort of testimonial from Geneva before preaching to evangelical groups in the kingdom.

In February 1555, error was clearly on Calvin's mind when he spontaneously denounced another individual who had passed through Geneva, Jean de Saint-Vertunien de Lavau. By the mid-1550s, the French Protestant movement had entered a new phase. Calvin had begun actively to encourage groups of believers to establish the "face of a church" by creating a body of governing elders and deacons. Pastors formed at either Lausanne or Geneva were beginning to slip into the country to serve the newly-established churches. The polemic between Calvin, Beza and Castellio was also heating up in the wake

9 *Joannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz and Eduardus Reuss, 59 vol. (Braunschweig and Berlin: C.A. Schwetschke, 1863–1900) [henceforward CO], 12, n° 726, Calvin to Viret, November 7 [1545], col. 210; see also Herminjard, *Correspondance des Réformateurs*, 9, 1897, n^{os}1409, 1411, 1420.

of Servetus's execution in Geneva in 1553 and the publication of Castellio's *De haereticis, an sint persequendi* in Basel the following year. At this key moment in the formation of the French Reformed churches, amid various letters offering advice about how to organize an underground church and less than six months after Calvin wrote a first letter to Poitou praising the faithful there for having had the courage to assemble, he wrote a second, exceptionally long missive to Poitiers to discredit Lavau, a medical doctor and prominent member of the church there.[10] Lavau had spent time in Geneva. He seems to have been close to Castellio and may have corresponded with Servetus.[11] In Poitiers (or so at least Calvin had been informed), he criticized the 1552 Geneva ordinance forbidding anybody to contradict the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and said that Calvin expected everybody there to kiss his slipper, just like the Pope. The letter that the reformer wrote urges the faithful to shun this "savage beast [...] presumptuous to the point of being ridiculous", who had "rubbed up against all the rotten sheep" around Lake Leman. False teachers must not be allowed to divide the young church; it was entirely appropriate that magistrates use their God-given authority to forbid blasphemy against the doctrine taught in their city. In any event, Lavau had been treated with moderation when in Geneva. Convincing members of a young church facing persecution that the government legitimately had the power to punish dissenting belief was no easy sell. Despite the explicit condemnation of Lavau and his "sectaries" in the early church order of the region known as the "*Articles Polytiques*", he was still reportedly "dogmatizing" and "causing schism" in the region on the eve of the first national synod in 1559, which ordered Poitiers' minister to try to talk him out of his errors or, failing that, summon him before the next provincial synod.[12] While we do not know whether these measures succeeded in changing Lavau's mind or excising him from the church, the *Histoire ecclésiastique* reports that not far from Poitiers, in Beaugency, a certain Jean Bonneau, "homme de bien [...] et de sçavoir", also maintained for a time that magistrates did not have the power to punish heretics and won other church members to this view, before the local consistory managed to convince him that he was wrong and

10 CO 15, n° 2118, 435–446, February 20, 1555. For other letters to France around this time, see n° 2005, 2007, 2101, 2287–2289.

11 Henri Tollin, "Saint Vertunien Delavau," *Archiv für pathologische Anatomie und Physiologie und für klinische Medicin* 101 (1885): 44–70; Buisson, *Castellion*, 2: 248–249, 443; Uwe Plath, *Calvin und Basel in den Jahren 1552–1556* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974), 194–196, 219.

12 *Organisation et action*, ed. Benedict and Fornerod, 3; Jean Aymon, *Tous les synodes nationaux des Églises réformées de France* (The Hague: Charles Delo, 1710), 1/2:8.

got him to sign a statement to this effect. He was ordained a minister soon after. Tellingly, the passage of the 1580 *Histoire ecclésiastique* that recounts how this "schism" in Beaugency was repaired notes that Bonneau was pressed to change his views on the issue even though it was "not an essential (*substantiel*) article of Christian faith".[13] Despite that later recognition, Castellio's "error" was clearly considered serious enough in 1555–1560 for Calvin to write one of his longest letters to combat it and for a regional church order, a national synod and a consistory all to act against it in his wake.

Once established, the French Reformed churches' own synods and consistories could take over the task of policing church unity and defining how much diversity of opinion or practice was permissible, as they did in the Bonneau case. They often had to do so as the number of churches proliferated spectacularly from 1559 to early 1562. In some instances, assemblies took shape around a charismatic preacher that nearby pastors suspected to be heterodox or unqualified for the office. In others, a pastor in place found his control over his congregation challenged by a new arrival with greater eloquence or charm. The Paris minister Antoine de Chandieu was so troubled by the number of those who claimed to "have zeal for advancing the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ" but ignored the new procedures established by the synods and thereby "shatter[ed] the order that God wishes to be inviolable in his Church" that he published in 1561 a *Warning to the faithful scattered through the kingdom of France to beware of those who usurp the Ministry of the Gospel without a legitimate calling*.[14] The records we have examined reveal 30 cases between 1561 and 1563 of ministers accused of insinuating themselves improperly into the pastorate or threatened with removal from office for teaching false doctrines or implementing unacceptable worship practices. The number rises to 31 if one includes the case of Charles Du Moulin, whose case would not be examined by a synod until 1565, by which time he had broken completely with the Reformed church, but who was alleged to have preached error publicly in Protestant-dominated Orléans in 1562–1563 and sought to administer the sacraments.[15] It rises to 32 if one includes Jean Cottin, the inspired prophet of a

13 [Théodore de Bèze], *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises réformées au Royaume de France*, ed. Guillaume Baum and Édouard Cunitz (Paris: Fischbacher, 1883–1889) [henceforward *HE*], 1:191.

14 [Antoine de Chandieu], *Advertissement aux fideles espars parmi le royaume de France, de se donner garde de ceux qui sans legitime vocation s'ingerent au Ministere de l'Evangile* ([Lyon?]: s.n., 1561), f. AIIV.-AIIIV.

15 Du Moulin was above all a critic of what he considered to be the consistory's usurpation of powers properly belonging to the secular magistracy, but he was also condemned in 1565 for errors concerning the doctrines of limbo, free will, the sin against the Holy Spirit, and the Eucharist. Aymon, *Tous les synodes*, 1/2:70; Thireau, *Charles Du Moulin*, 47, 52–55.

Muntzerian stripe who summoned a large crowd of listeners to arms for a final apocalyptic battle during four days of preaching outside Rouen in 1560; the Reformed of that city would surely have condemned him for usurping the post of minister had he not been quickly seized by the royal governor, perhaps with some aid from the Protestants, and executed.[16] Enough of those who would be removed by one synod for preaching without proper approval would turn up a second time preaching somewhere else that beginning in 1563 the national synods began to publish lists of these "deposed and vagabond ministers", also known as *coureurs*, to prevent them from ascending the pulpit of another church. The first list contained 27 names.[17]

Although there were still cases where Geneva's ministers pressed a French church to dismiss a locally appreciated pastor, most notably the Villeroche affair that involved no less than three such demands from Geneva,[18] most denunciations of illegitimate or heterodox ministers after 1559 originated within France. Often, one or both of the rival parties turned to Geneva for support. If Geneva indeed became a new Rome in this period, as more than one minister who found himself facing censure complained, this was not just because Calvin sought to impose an orthodoxy. It was also because he and the other Geneva ministers provided a court of appeal that retained an aura of authority even after France had its own synodal network. When French synods could not settle a knotty problem of theology or resolve an internal conflict, they sometimes themselves turned to Geneva for guidance.[19] In other instances, French

16 *HE* 1:305–307; Crouzet, *Genèse*, 442–443.

17 We rely here on the transcription of the national synods from ms Rawlinson D 638(b) of the Bodleian Library kindly provided us by Bernard Roussel. Another version of the same document: Aymon, *Tous les synodes*, 1/2:49, lists only 24 *coureurs*.

18 CO 18, n° 3464; 19, n° 3543; Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555–1563* (Genève: Droz, 1956), 44. We believe that Geneva's zeal to have Villeroche removed was triggered by a complaint its consistory received in April 1561, that the minister had clandestinely promised to marry the sister of a nobleman who sheltered him while he served the church of Metz four years previously. Archives d'État de Genève, Registres du Consistoire [henceforward AEG, RConsist] 18, fol. 31. The documentation concerning the case also shows that Villeroche conceded in the course of a debate with Castellio that Calvin had smeared his opponent with some pretty ugly insults, an action that might not have endeared him to Calvin, and then subsequently engaged in an angry argument with the reformer. Buisson, *Castellion*, 2:451–453; CO 20, n° 4204.

19 For instances, see CO 19, n° 3692; Aymon, *Tous les synodes*, 1/2:48, 50–57.

ministers who did not like a decision just taken by a synod appealed to Geneva in the hope of finding its pastors more sympathetic to their views.[20]

The well-studied crisis that split Nîmes' church in 1561 shows just how eagerly rival ministers within France could turn toward Geneva or invoke Calvin's authority when they fell out with one another.[21] It also suggests how important personal rivalries were in many conflicts, even when accusations of error or improperly usurping the ministerial function also flew. The conflict within this church that had at the time just one pastor, Guillaume Mauget, began soon after a second minister, Jean Mouton or Mutonis, came to town. Mutonis, an ex-Dominican, had already preached in Nîmes in 1559.[22] He then went to Geneva to enroll in the academy there, was sent back to Languedoc after a year's study to serve the church of Montagnac, was released by that church because it became too dangerous for it to assemble, and became an itinerant minister authorized by the synod of Sauve. When he reappeared in Nîmes around Easter 1561, he was invited to give several sermons. A fraction within the consistory appreciated his preaching; it urged him to continue and circulated a petition to have him named pastor alongside Mauget. The majority within the consistory felt that he overstepped the bounds of his initial invitation by continuing to preach and celebrating a marriage without Mauget's knowledge; it censured him. The two men fell out. A special assembly of the ministers of the colloquy was convoked to reconcile them. It failed to bring peace to the increasingly divided church, and the two sides dispatched letters and memoranda to Geneva to set out their side of the story; Mutonis even went in person to plead his case. Strikingly, even before turning to Geneva to try to resolve the dispute, both ministers had cited Calvin in their debates with one another, with Mauget saying testily at one point that Mutonis did not have to remind him what was in the *Institutes*; he had read the book before his adversary had left the convent. In the end, Calvin concluded that both parties had been "too rigid" and "too drawn to personalities (*affectionné aux personnes*)" and urged them to make peace.[23] Mutonis was finally assigned to Uzès.

20 For instances, see CO 19, no 3790; Benedict and Fornerod, "Faut-il excommunier sur-le-champ les iconoclastes et ceux qui refusent de payer les dîmes? Un ‹ brevet › synodal inconnu de 1561," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 159 (2013): 297–312.

21 Detailed accounts and key documents may be found in Philippe Chareyre, "Jean Mouton et Dominique Deyron, anciens Jacobins, acteurs de la Réforme nîmoise," *Mémoire dominicaine* 12 (1998): 121–140; *Organisation et action*, ed. Benedict and Fornerod, 63–79.

22 This detail, not previously noted by historians, is revealed by AEG, RConsist15, fol. 164v.

23 CO 18, n° 3407.

Neither debates about doctrine nor accusations of having violated proper church procedure were absent in this conflict. Over its course Mauget and his supporters accused Mutonis of allowing all comers to partake of the Lord's Supper at Uzès without having previously ascertained their mastery of the elements of the faith; of permitting women to participate in the election of deacons and elders when he set up the church of Saint-Ambroix; of disobeying a synod's decision and speaking ill of its participants; and of asserting that the ordination of ministers by the laying on of hands was a third Scriptural sacrament alongside baptism and the Lord's Supper. But while issues of doctrine and practice were at play, it is hard to escape the impression that the conflict's root cause was, as Calvin said, a matter of clashing personalities. It certainly was not a battle between a Calvinist and an anti-Calvinist, since support for Mutonis' position on the laying on of hands could be found in the *Institutes*, and each man actively worked to show himself more Calvinist than his rival.

Issues of doctrine and practice reappear in a larger conflict revealed by a letter from Provence to Geneva's Company of Pastors dated 20 September 1562, but here too bad blood and suspicion appear to be at the core of a clash between rivals who nearly all, with one exception, appear to have been good Calvinists. This letter was signed by six obscure ministers from the Lubéron region, two of whom are known to have been dispatched from Geneva.[24] It was written at a point in the First Civil War when Catholic forces had already driven the Protestants out of most of Provence except for this traditional Waldensian bastion. The six ministers accuse four colleagues serving elsewhere in the province of conspiring together "to reduce this poor province to the same degree of corruption of religion that they formerly introduced into the lands of Bern". One of the four they name, Georges Corméli, had already been suspended *in absentia* at a contentious provincial synod meeting in Lourmarin for

24 CO 19, n° 3854, signatories "Vos freres et humbles serviteurs les ministres de Lormarin, La Roque [d'Anthéron], La Coste Roussillon, Sivergues, La Motte [d'Aigues] et de Cenas [Sénas]: De Mercurins, Manny, de Fargues, Bouon, Delasale, Spiron". De Mercurins or de Mercure, and Manny or Magni appear on the lists of pastors dispatched from Geneva. De Mercurins is also known to have traveled to Poland in 1560 and to have exercised his ministry in Marseille as well as Lourmarin. Ironically, although in this instance he was one of a group of ministers who turned to Geneva to denounce colleagues, four years later he would clash with Geneva's ministers for reasons that we have not been able to determine and accuse them amid the quarrel of seeking to usurp "primacy and prerogative" over France's churches. (*Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze*, vol. 7, ed. Henri Meylan, Alain Dufour, Claire Chimelli and Mario Turchetti (Genève: Droz, 1973), 350–351, 353–354; vol. 8, ed. H. Meylan, A. Dufour and C. Chimelli (Genève: Droz, 1976), 52–54; Aymon, *Tous les synodes*, 1/2:110). Nothing is known about the other signers of the letter.

having insinuated himself improperly into the ministry. Two of the others had expressed support for him.

The specific charges made against each of the four ministers vary in character and length. The complaint about Jean Chabrand, pastor of Vilhosc, does not allege that he was in contact with the others; it simply charges that he celebrated the marriage of a Catholic prior and his concubine in a private ceremony without publishing any banns.[25] Nicolas Parent, the minister of Digne who came to Provence in 1561 with more than twenty years of pastoral experience already behind him in Strasbourg and the county of Neuchâtel,[26] was denounced for having urged Cornéli to return to Provence by telling him he would find plenty of supporters and friends at the next provincial synod. The dossier on Cornéli, or Corneille, is thicker. A former Augustinian who left holy orders and became a minister in Bernese territory, he went to Provence to serve the church of Puymichel but was accused of lacking the proper attestations from Geneva, "a matter that could incite schism" that the consistory of Puymichel denied in a letter to Pierre Viret.[27] He left little Puymichel early in 1561 and went to Orange, where the potential harvest of souls was greater. One wonders just what about him so quickly put off his colleagues. Even though the church of Orange appreciated him, some ministers in the vicinity criticized him for abandoning his prior post without being properly released by its consistory, an accusation he himself rebutted in a fawning letter to Calvin in which he protested that as long as he lived he would follow his advice.[28] His attempts to rally support from the cause's leading figures notwithstanding, he was deposed from his ministry at the provincial synod of Lourmarin. In late 1561 and early 1562, however, the number of churches was exploding, and with it the clamor for pastors to serve them. Cornéli thus returned to Provence and evidently worked as a minister with the support of allies such as Parent. In the letter of September 1562, the six ministers of the Lubéron laid on further accusations against him beyond having improperly insinuated himself into the ministry and then

25 Ibid., 536.

26 For the outlines of Parent's biography, see Philippe Denis, *Les Églises d'étrangers en pays rhénans (1538–1564)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984), 69; Gabrielle Berthoud, "Les Français dans le clergé neuchâtelois," in *Cinq siècles de relations franco-suisses: hommage à Louis-Édouard Roulet* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1984), 67; *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs*, vol. 4, ed. Olivier Labarthe and Bernard Lescaze (Genève: Droz, 1974), 38n2.

27 *Epistolae Petri Vireti*, ed. Michael W. Bruening (Genève: Droz, 2012), 416.

28 CO 19, n° 3855, undated but datable to c. July 1561 from the contents. That he was much appreciated by the church of Orange emerges from CO 18, n^{os} 3409, 3413; 19, n° 3654.

disobeying the synod's suspension: he had allegedly called the ministers of the province "fools and ninnies (*sots et badauds*)" after the synod, defended the retention of many annual feast days in a sermon in Orange, claimed that Saint Anthony deserved as much respect as the Apostles, and come to Provence with a pregnant woman in tow whom he married *en la papauté* shortly before she gave birth. What the six ministers did not know when they wrote to Geneva was that by September 1562 the pastor they so mistrusted was already several months dead. In late May or June, he was part of a band of fleeing Protestants that was ambushed and slaughtered by a group of peasants in the mountains at the far end of the province. The massacre of this group and Cornéli's presence with it would be recalled in the *Histoire ecclésiastique* and subsequently the *Histoire des Martyrs* in a fashion that suggests that those who compiled this history did not considered him to have been anything other than a legitimate minister of the Gospel.[29] This black sheep in the eyes of the Lubéron ministers thus ended up a martyr in the eyes of Huguenot posterity.

The charges against Matthieu Eyssautier were the most ample of all. A veteran of nearly ten years of service in two villages on the outskirts of Geneva, he too had been censured at Lourmarin, not for improperly usurping the pastorate but for a number of pastoral failings: administering communion in private to two individuals who had not been received into the church; celebrating the Lord's Supper with his entire congregation of rude country folk after only two days of catechizing; and advising church members in prison for their faith to make up the name of a monk and say they had done their Easter duty with him in order to win their release. Far from amending his ways after the synod, the Lubéron ministers alleged, Eyssautier had continued to show himself excessively lax in applying the church's discipline. He later administered a baptism in private, sent a church member to the bishop's court to resolve a legal issue concerning marriage, and named as a deacon an ex-priest who shared his house with a woman to whom he was not married. They also accused him of sending Cornéli the names of those who spoke against him at the synod of Lourmarin. Finally, he was said to have maintained in debate that Christians could not go to the magistrate to punish sedition, "words that seem to the complainants to come straight from Castellio's boutique". That Eyssautier might have shopped at that boutique comes as no surprise; he was Castellio's brother-in-law!

29 *HE* 3:462; Jean Crespin, *Histoire des martyrs persecutez et mis à mort pour la verité de l'Evangile, depuis le temps des apostres jusques à present* (1619), ed. Daniel Benoit (Toulouse: Société des livres religieux, 1887), 3:388.

Eyssautier's fate was different from Corneli's. Like Parent and Chabrand he was able to escape Provence safely in the autumn of 1562. Parent disappears from view thereafter until his death in Geneva in 1576. Chabrand would serve the church of Charpey in Dauphiné and return to Vilhosc early in 1565.[30] Eyssautier returned to his pastorate in Saconnex, just outside Geneva in the Pays de Gex, but before 1562 was out he was summoned before the Geneva consistory to answer to the accusations conveyed by the pastors' letter. He denied having done any of the actions for which the synod of Lourmarin had censured him and promised to obtain evidence in support of his claims from Provence. But he also displayed a worrisome lack of deference to authority of the Company of Pastors. As he himself admitted, he had initially gone to France without a letter of attestation from Geneva. Even though the ministers there finally appointed him pastor without one, questions were asked about why he did not have such a letter. In the course of that discussion, he freely admitted, he had said that to make all ministers obtain letters from Geneva would be like making everybody go to Rome to kiss the Pope's slippers.[31] The consistory suspended him from the Lord's Supper until he could provide the documents he promised in his defense. When he then grumbled to its secretary on receiving the full list of accusations made against him by his colleagues in Provence that he had always fulfilled the duties of his office without reproach and was now being unjustly slandered, his words were taken to be insulting to "*aulcungs spectables ministres*" and earned him another summons before the consistory, which now pressed him to say that his brother-in-law was a heretic. When he refused to do so and complained that his wife and children had been ill treated while he was in Provence because of the family connection, the consistory wasted no time in handing down a rare sentence of full excommunication. The sentence was of dubious import since Bern claimed sovereignty over Saconnex. Eyssautier did not lose his ministerial post. It nonetheless shows just how aggressively Castellio's ideas and all those associated with him were being pursued at the time.[32]

The cases that we have recounted here in some detail seem typical of most of the conflicts revealed by the early records of the French churches and their correspondence with Geneva. That Calvin and Beza could pursue theological

30 *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs* vol. 3, ed. Olivier Fatio and Olivier Labarthe (Genève: Droz, 1969), 171.

31 "Confesse bien avoir dict qu'il seroit faict de Geneve ung Romme au cas qu'il faillust que chascung vinst prendre lettre d'attestation en ceste cité, et mesmes comme baiser la pantoffle": AEG, RConsist 19, fol. 184.

32 AEG, RConsist 19, fol. 178v., 184, 187, 209v.–210.

opponents unforgivingly and find disciples within France to second their efforts is illustrated by episodes beyond their long-running campaign against Castellionism. Morély would soon be the object of another such campaign. It is also noteworthy that among the *coureurs* listed in 1563 was Jérome Bolsec, who famously fell out with Calvin over predestination twelve years previously and whom the synod now felt moved to denounce to support efforts by Geneva's ministers to get the Bernese authorities to expel him from Lausanne.[33]

Mutonis and Eyssautier were not the only ministers accused of excessive laxity in exercising church discipline or admitting people to communion in the years 1560–1562. A colleague in Rouergue charged Jean Chrestien, alias de la Garande, with advocating that anybody who wanted to partake of the eucharist be allowed to do so.[34] Gilles Tartier, pastor of Massay (Cher), complained that his colleague in Bourges, David Véran, said that his calling was "to preach, and not to reform and correct."[35] In this period when neophytes were being attracted in droves, a certain number of ministers clearly felt either that it was unwise to be too strict about barring people from the central sacrament of the new church, or that consistorial discipline was not an essential component of a truly Reformed church. This is not the only evidence to suggest that resistance to consistorial discipline was fairly widespread among Frenchmen otherwise drawn to the cause of Protestantism.

Yet what is perhaps most striking in most of the cases we have examined here is how slight are the charges of heterodoxy or improper practice leveled in the course of these conflicts and how late they emerge in the chronology of events, when they emerge at all. This too is not atypical. In slightly over half of the situations that we have encountered of pastors accusing rivals of having improperly usurped a ministerial position, the accusation is accompanied by only the vaguest mention of "bad doctrine" or no mention whatsoever of any errors or improper practices. Jealousies, inter-personal clashes, differences of appreciation about the right course to follow when faced with hard calls about pastoral care, and even different readings of Calvin's works all

33 Aymon, *Tous les synodes*, 1/2:49. At the 1563 provincial synod of Montdidier Sebastien Poncelet a.k.a. Samuel Favre was also charged with spreading an unspecified heresy concerning predestination. Rotterdam, Gemeentebibliotheek, Bibliotheek der Remonstrantsch-Gereformeerde, ms. 404, 68.

34 *HE* 1:951.

35 CO 18, n° 3400. In a subsequent letter to Calvin, Véran admitted that he had been lax in exercising discipline, alleging by way of excuse that "nobody here understands his duty": BGE, ms lat. 121, fol. 28. On Véran see *Organisastion et action*, ed. Benedict and Fornerod, 54n33 and the sources cited there.

also contributed to the not infrequent cases of discord between pastors within the young French Reformed churches. Above all, the new rules created by the churches in their quest to show themselves united in doctrine, discipline and a divinely ordained church order provoked a good number of disputes when first applied. The very process of institutionalization undergone by the churches in these years may have generated as much discord as diversity of theological opinion among its ministers and opinion-leaders. The quest for unity may have arisen from within these churches as much as it was imposed from Geneva.

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